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CHAPTERS IN INDIAN CIVILIZATION--A HANDBOOK OF READINGS TO  
ACCOMPANY THE CIVILIZATION OF INDIA SYLLABUS. VOLUME I,  
CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL INDIA.

BY- ELDER, JOSEPH W., ED.

WISCONSIN UNIV., MADISON, DEPT. OF INDIAN STUDIES

REPORT NUMBER BR-6-2512

PUB DATE

JUN 67

CONTRACT OEC-3-6-062512-1744

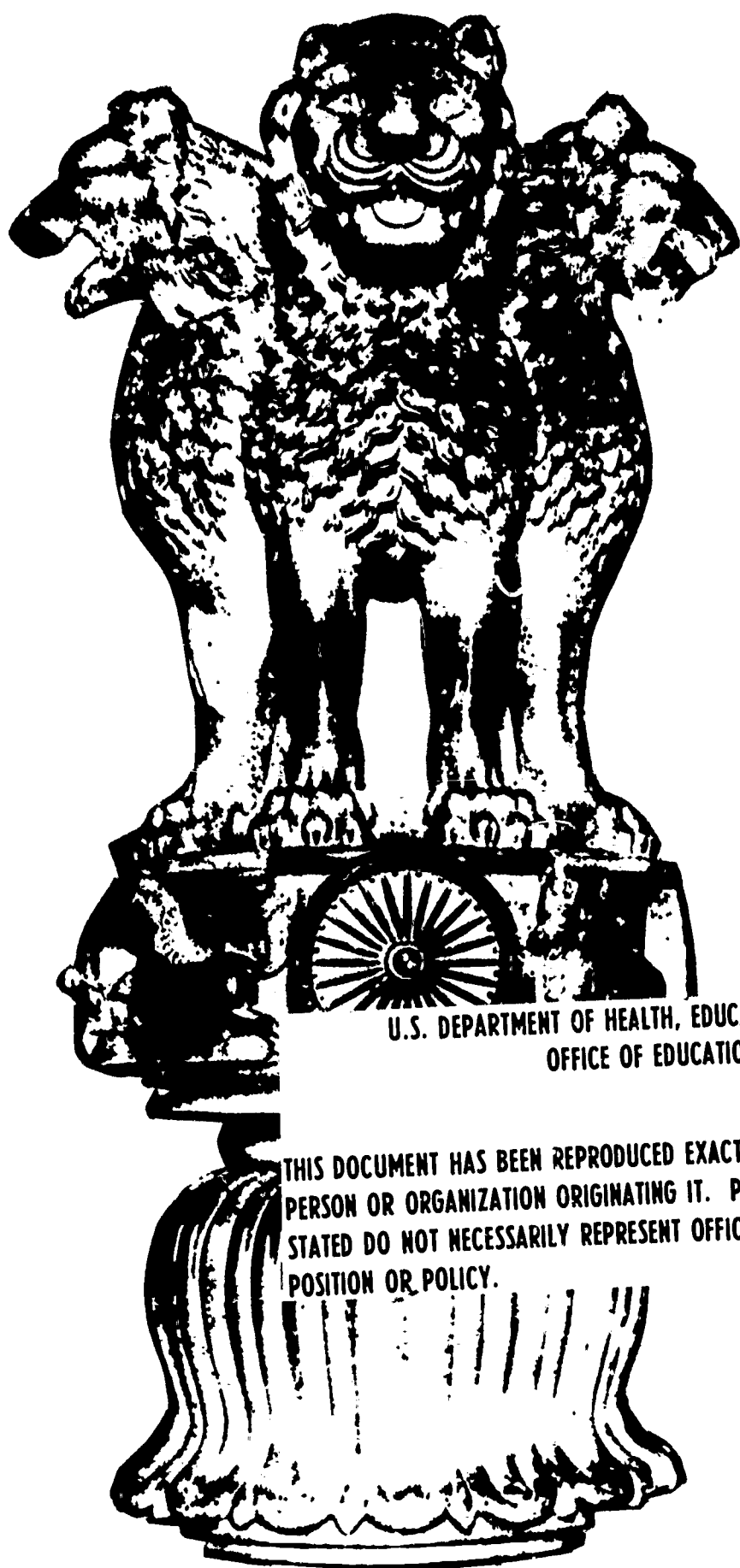
EDRS PRICE MF-\$1.00 HC-\$9.40 233P.

DESCRIPTORS- \*INDIANS, \*CULTURE, \*AREA STUDIES, HISTORY,  
\*READING MATERIALS, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, PHILOSOPHY,  
\*LANGUAGE AND AREA CENTERS, INDIA,

THESE READINGS ARE DESIGNED TO ACCOMPANY COLLEGE-LEVEL  
COURSES DEALING WITH INDIA, ESPECIALLY THOSE USING THE  
"CIVILIZATION OF INDIA SYLLABUS" (BY THE SAME EDITOR AND  
PUBLISHERS, SEPTEMBER 1965). VOLUME I CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING  
SELECTIONS--(1) "VEDIC AND UPANISADIC BASES OF INDIAN  
CIVILIZATION," BY J.A.B. VAN BUITENEN, (2) "SRAMANAS--THEIR  
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FURTHER READINGS ON BRITISH AND MODERN INDIA. THESE MATERIALS  
(WRITTEN IN ENGLISH) ARE PUBLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF  
INDIAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, MADISON, WISCONSIN  
53706. (AMM)

ED017907

OEI-3-6-062512-1744  
48



# CHAPTERS IN INDIAN CIVILIZATION

JOSEPH W. ELDER  
Editor

## VOLUME I CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL PERIOD

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE  
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

A. K. NARAIN  
Special Consultant

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Department of Indian Studies  
University of Wisconsin  
Madison, Wisconsin

June, 1967

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CHAPTERS IN INDIAN CIVILIZATION:

A HANDBOOK OF READINGS TO ACCOMPANY  
THE CIVILIZATION OF INDIA SYLLABUS

Joseph W. Elder, Editor

VOLUME I - CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL INDIA

A. K. Narain, Special Consultant

Department of Indian Studies  
The University of Wisconsin  
Madison, Wisconsin

June, 1967

The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract with the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, under the provisions of Title VI, Public Law 85-864, as amended, Section 602.

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In September, 1965, the Department of Indian Studies of the University of Wisconsin, under contract with the U. S. Office of Education, published a Civilization of India Syllabus that I edited, assisted by Willard L. Johnson and Christopher R. King. While preparing the Syllabus, we asked ourselves whether or not we should consider preparing an accompanying textbook. It was our consensus, as well as the consensus of those who had helped plan the Syllabus, that such a textbook would repeat much of what was already available in such books as A. L. Basham's The Wonder That Was India, S. M. Ikram's Muslim Civilization in India, and Wm. Theodore DeBary's edited Sources of Indian Tradition. So for the time being we abandoned the thought of an accompanying textbook.

Once the Syllabus preparation was underway, however, we discovered the need for a different sort of book. The author of each lecture outline included a 'required' reading assignment of approximately fifty pages. Usually this posed no problem. But occasionally an author reported that there simply were no fifty-page readings on the topic or of the quality we required. Our makeshift solution was to list multiple references or to recommend the best article we could, even if we knew it was unavailable to most Syllabus users. Neither solution was satisfactory.

At this point an idea occurred to us: could we not prepare a volume of chapters specifically designed to fill existing gaps in materials on India? The Office of Education proved responsive to the idea and signed a contract for the necessary funds. In June, 1966 my colleague Alex Wayman, who had taught the classical portion of our "Civilization of India" course, Willard Johnson, Christopher King and I met to map out what we felt should be included in the volume. We were aided by the participants in a four-week faculty Workshop on South Asia held in Madison during June and July. At the end of the Workshop, the faculty participants described the materials they would like to see in such a collection. The inclusion of chapter eleven, "The Study of Civilizations," can be attributed directly to them. By the end of the summer, we had generally decided what the chapters would cover, whom we would invite as authors, and in a number of cases we even prepared rough outlines of what we thought the chapters might include.

The task of approaching the authors was made most pleasant by their willingness to cooperate and their enthusiasm for the project. Despite their heavy teaching and administrative burdens, they managed to crowd their days and shorten their nights to meet the deadlines that had to be established if the contract were to be met. To each author I am deeply grateful both for the quality of his writing and for his tolerance of my editorial persistence.

I have been most fortunate to have as a Special Consultant for the "Classical and Medieval India" volume Dr. A. K. Narain, Principal of the College of Indology in Banaras Hindu University and visiting professor in the University of Wisconsin during the 1966-67 academic year. He also graciously submitted to the pressures and deadlines of the contract. His comments were learned, judicious and helpful, and I am deeply indebted to him. I am also grateful to my two graduate assistants, Christopher R. King and Mark A. Ehman, and to Willard L. Johnson for all their help in planning, preparing bibliography, and indexing the Chapters. Without them, both the format and content of these Chapters would be much less complete. I am also indebted to Mrs. Norah Adair, assistant to the director of Wisconsin's South Asia Language and Area Center, who helped draft the contract proposal and subsequently assumed responsibility for handling the financial side of the project. With her quiet efficiency, she has seen that checks were issued and reports prepared to meet the contract specifications.

I am grateful to the Center for Advanced Studies in Wesleyan University and the Danforth Foundation in St. Louis for providing me with the free time and delightful Connecticut setting for carrying out several writing projects including the editing of these Chapters. Wyman Parker, Gertrude McKenna and the other members of Wesleyan's Olin Library staff deserve special mention for their assistance in tracking down elusive references. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Wesleyan students who enrolled in my Workshop on "India and Western Intellectuals." The stimulation they provided by preparing sections of chapter six and serving as a sounding board for my own ideas was so valuable that I have listed their names along with my own at the head of the chapter.

The chapter on "Dance, Dance-Drama, and Music" by Cliff R. Jones and Robert E. Brown called for illustrations and musical notations. For the former I am deeply grateful to Louise A. Smith, whose line drawings of the instruments and dancers add much to the chapter's effectiveness. For the latter I am grateful to Muriel C. Hintz, who painstakingly copied the *rāgas* to provide a more inclusive collection than any I have ever seen elsewhere. Frank H. Murtha, manager of Wesleyan University's Central Services, and his staff also deserve special recognition for their flexibility, technical skill, and friendly cooperation.

For the maps and proofreading I am indebted to my charming wife, Joann F. Elder, and her mother, Mabel D. Byers. Had it not been for their willingness to devote long hours to the concluding rush of work, this project would have been considerably delayed. And to my daughter, Shonti R. Elder, I am indebted for the title Chapters in Indian Civilization. When she turned up her nose at my working title (Handbook of Supplementary Readings) and I challenged her to do better, she did.

Undoubtedly the heroine of this project has been Karen L. Meyers. Starting

as one who had worked with neither Indian diacritical marks nor an executive model typewriter before, she became a virtuoso in both. Her own uncommon good sense prevented countless mistakes before they were made, and the care that she and her husband, Peter V. Meyers, gave to the proofreading made reading by others almost superfluous. She has borne with good-humored patience the project's numerous vicissitudes, and I can only hope that now that the project is successfully concluded, she can enjoy some of the rest she so richly deserves.

Joseph W. Elder  
Middletown, Connecticut  
June 28, 1967



## INTRODUCTION

### A. How To Use The Chapters

These Chapters in Indian Civilization are designed as readings to accompany courses dealing with India, especially courses using the Civilization of India Syllabus. Their aim is to supplement rather than to replace such presently-available materials as A. L. Basham's The Wonder That Was India and Wm. Theodore DeBary's edited Sources of Indian Tradition. About the only feature each chapter shares with all the others is its selection by the Syllabus staff to fill a gap in existing materials dealing with India.

No effort has been made for one chapter to lead into the next. The chapters in volume I pertain to Classical and Medieval India; the chapters in volume II deal with British and Modern India. Within these volumes, the chapters are arranged according to the order in which the lectures they accompany appear in the forthcoming revision of the Civilization of India Syllabus. This arrangement is quite arbitrary, and the instructor assigning these Chapters is encouraged to exercise his own imagination in fitting them most effectively into his course.

### B. Revision of the Chapters

The Chapters will be revised within the next few months. The editor would appreciate any comments or suggestions for improvements. Write:

Joseph W. Elder, Editor  
Chapters in Indian Civilization  
Department of Indian Studies  
The University of Wisconsin  
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

### C. Spelling and Pronunciation

Where it seemed necessary, diacritical marks have been included on Indian words to give their appropriate spelling and to aid pronunciation. The standard source for Sanskrit-based words has been A. L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India, New York: Grove Press, 1959. For Persian and Arabic-based words, we have used I. H. Qureshi, The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610-1947), The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton, 1962. For Hindi words we have relied on Bhargava's Standard Illustrated Dictionary of the Hindi Language: (Hindi-English Edition), compiled by R.C. Pathak, Varanasi: P.N. Bhargava, rev. ed., 1960.

Key sounds for correct pronunciation are the vowels, although certain consonants are also crucial. The following table provides the most important sound equivalents:

|             |      |  |
|-------------|------|--|
| Vowels:     | a    | as u in but, cut ( <u>not</u> as a in cat) |
|             | ā    | as a in far, calm                          |
|             | i    | as i in pin, bit                           |
|             | ī    | as i in machine                            |
|             | u    | as u in pull, bull                         |
|             | ū    | as u in rule                               |
| Diphthongs: | e    | as ai in chair                             |
|             | ai   | as ai in aisle                             |
|             | o    | as o in go                                 |
|             | au   | as ow in cow                               |
|             | r    | as ri in river, rich                       |
| Consonants: | c    | as ch in church                            |
|             | g    | as g in go                                 |
|             | ś, ṣ | approximately as sh in rush, shape         |

For further help in pronunciation see A. L. Basham, op. cit., p. xxi and pp. 506-508 and I. H. Qureshi, op. cit., p. 10.

J. W. E.



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CHAPTER I

VEDIC AND UPANIṢADIC BASES OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

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Chicago, Illinois

## VEDIC AND UPANIṢADIC BASES OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

J. A. B. Van Buitenen

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## VEDIC AND UPANIṢADIC BASES OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

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### I. Introduction

There are two distinct ways in which we can view the Veda: as a series of documents, spanning almost a millennium, that record the religious experience and practice of certain classes of the Indian population; or as a perennially given Book that is forever, for all Indians, Revelation. Our point of view will be the first one. But considering the cultural importance of the second, a few words should be said by way of introduction about how traditional India views the Veda as Revelation.

The word 'Revelation' itself is deceptive. The Veda is by no means considered God's Word. At no specific point of time did God interrupt the course of history by the revealing of a new Truth. Revelation is neither theistic nor historic. Nor is it a 'Holy Writ'. For a considerable period, the Veda in all its complexity was transmitted orally by professional priest schools without the benefit of writing. Nor, again, was it universally accessible; on the contrary, only the three twice-born classes were qualified to hear it, and among them practically only the professional priests, and those among the noblemen who sponsored rituals, had access to it. And even when a person had access to it, say around the beginning of our era, he might well have found much of it unintelligible.

To those brought up in the mediterranean religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all this would seem to hold little promise for the existential significance of this 'Revelation'. Nevertheless, its influence has been tremendous. In many ways, not a few of them indirect, the Veda is fundamental to Indian orthodoxy.

Tradition divides religious and dharmic literature into two broad categories, śruti and smṛti, or 'Revelation' and 'Tradition'. Of the two, the first is self-authenticating, while the second is validated to the extent that it is not in conflict with the first. Again, śruti, i.e., the Veda, is divided into two highly unequal parts: the Portion of Works, and the Portion of Knowledge. The Portion of Works, roughly comprising the pre-Upaniṣadic Vedic literature, sets forth, 1) the injunctions to specific ritual performances for specific purposes, 2) expository passages that illuminate, praise or condemn matters pertaining to ritual performances, and 3) the mantras or Vedic verses and formulas employed at these ritual performances. In the exegesis of this Portion of Works, the expositor is wholly preoccupied with liturgy; his interpretations eventually are organized in Mīmāṃsā, the Science of Works. This science has exerted considerable influence on Dharma Śāstra, and in a definite way the complex

of dharma (correct action) may be considered to have grown out of the complex of Vedic ritual. The brāhmanas continue to be both exemplars and arbiters of ritual and dharma. Rite and dharma pertain to this world and accept the goodness of this world and the heaven with which they are engaged.

The Portion of Knowledge, comprising mainly the older Upaniṣads, does not deal with ritual acts to be performed but with insight to be acquired. This insight is not an abstract philosophic concern, but the means actively to progress beyond the world of contrasts to that state of ultimate unity where one passes from transmigration to the eternal bliss of release. This part of śruti (i.e., the Portion of Knowledge) will become the scriptural basis of Vedānta that perhaps more than any other religious philosophy has given direction to the Indian spirit.

In its entirety the Veda stands revealed at the beginning of creation. It is given with the world. At its dawn the ancient seers (ṛṣis) saw the Veda, which they thence transmitted to their pupils; and thus they set into motion a tradition that uninterruptedly continues to this day. It is not historic, in the sense that it is datable; for when creation gives way to dissolution and recreation, the Veda re-emerges with the world itself. Being eternal, it is simultaneous; any part may be used to elucidate any other part within each of the Two Portions. Knowledge of it is not a matter of course, but the fruit of laborious and assiduous study, open to the twice-born alone. And the student, thus engaged in the sacred study, is conscious of continuing a life line which for us stretches back over a hundred and fifty generations; but to him to eternity.

## II. The Vedic Literature

What in the traditional view is the least significant part of the Veda, the mantras (or verses and formulas) is to Western scholarship the most ancient and for many scholars the most important part of it. Indeed, while for the Indian the word 'Veda' describes the entire literature that terminates with the Upaniṣads, in the West it is commonly used to refer to the four most ancient collections, the 'Four Vedas,' Ṛg Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda and Atharva Veda.

Among the four, the first three belong closely together. The Ṛg Veda is a collection of hymns in ten books, devoted to gods, natural phenomena, sacrificial elements, but also to speculation about the origin of the world, the structure of society, and the ultimate basis of reality beneath it. Many of the hymns were either composed for use in ritual or later incorporated in it. When the ritual enjoyed its highest efflorescence in the next period, the Ṛg Veda verses were recited by a set of priests whose erudition was specifically that of the Ṛg Veda.

While many hymns of the Ṛg Veda may well antedate this ritual use, the Yajur Veda and Sāma Veda are collections whose purpose is exclusively liturgic. The

first contains those formulas that another set of priests employ at the festive celebration of a sacrifice, while the second is in fact an anthology from the Rg Veda of verses that, set to certain melodies, were chanted by yet another set of priests. From the point of view of the ritual these three Vedas belong intimately together, and texts do not hesitate to speak of the 'triple Veda.'

The Atharva Veda stands apart--a collection of spells that were used for rites rather different from those of the other three. Many of them are magical and speak to immediate existential needs--to ward off disease or cure it; to put a hex on an enemy; to cause a woman to fall in love with one; to ensure a safe confinement, and the like. But at the same time, the number of speculative hymns increases considerably. The priests who administer this Veda seem a class apart, folk magicians and medicine men rather than the confident ministers of the grand and cosmic sacrifices. Still, their power was great, and one of them, the brahmān (an Atharva Veda term) usually remained silent in these rituals, speaking only when errors were committed and pronouncing the charms to set them right.

Dating is a perilous adventure in the history of Indian literature. Generally the date of Buddha's demise is taken as the first firm point from which to plot backward the course of events by what has aptly been called 'philological dead reckoning.' Thus the Rg Veda is usually dated c. 1400 B.C., the Atharva Veda c. 1200 B.C., while the other two, as repertories of certain sets of priests, must have developed with the sacrifice itself during the period from 1400 to 1000 B.C. It may well turn out that these dates are too early.

While the four Vedas, or (more precisely) the Samhitās (compilations), are in verse, or in brief formulaic prose, the class of texts immediately following them are entirely in prose. These are the Brāhmaṇas--the texts pertaining to the brahman, or the creative power of Word and Rite. The texts are arranged, first, according to the Veda to which they 'belong'--that means, the Veda to which belongs the priestly office with which they are mostly concerned. But the spread of the Vedic liturgy over northern India meanwhile had affected a further differentiation of the priestly schools. Inevitable change, which is the gift of time and place, had produced variations in the manner in which rites were performed, and 'branches' (śākhās) had developed that each had a prescribed form of their own. Among Rg Vedic priests, for instance, there was a Kauṣītaki and a Śāṅkhāyana way of rec'ing. In the Yajur Veda, things were even more complicated: there was a Black, or Taittirīya Yajur Veda and a White, or Vājasaneyi one, each of which produced its own branches.

In the Brāhmaṇas we have the monumental record of organized sacerdotalism; the principal rituals have been formulated, science is now a commentary thereon. Generally, they follow the rituals in their deployment, giving advice as to how to perform them, providing interpretations of single rites, gestures, utensils and formulas,



making up myths to account for the circumstances of the rite, and building up a semi-scientific set of correlations between the process of rite and the state of the cosmos.

Generally the Brāhmaṇas are dated between 1000 and 800 B.C., although this depends on the dates we set for the saṃhitās and may be on the early side. In style they are leisurely, repetitious, sometimes formulaic, always highly professional. These are technical treatises of professionals eminently concerned with their craft. But as their craft involved the most basic mechanisms that govern the structure and the workings of the cosmos, the technician is also the philosopher, explaining the correlations between moments in the rite and elements in the structure of the macrocosmos, and the major and minor equations between sacrifice and universe.

This concern is continued in the next layer of texts, the Āraṇyakas or Forest books. Forest in ancient India is a blanket term for all land that was not under active cultivation and which was not related to a village. There were out-of-the-ordinary rites that could not, or should not, be performed within the limits of a village--either not to be profaned by its workaday life, or to protect it from the magical powers set loose by them. Likewise, there was speculation that was best conducted in the forest, thought that began to venture beyond the tidy universe of birth, work, death and heaven that the village represented. While the Brāhmaṇas were more and more concerned with the interrelationships between rite and cosmos, in the Āraṇyakas a complementary concern begins to be voiced: the interrelations between these terms and the human person involved in the ritual. It is through his performance of the rite that man himself is engaged in, and in fact responsible for, the macrocosmos; and through the rite the macrocosmos begins to touch directly upon man himself. Brāhmaṇic thought has moved from thinking about the rite to thinking about the man doing the rite and his posture toward the greater universe he thus helps sustain.

This transitional body of texts--datable, perhaps, between 800 and 600 B.C.--now appearing like appendices to the Brāhmaṇas, then like preambles to the Upaniṣads, shades into the early prose Upaniṣads (600-500 B.C.?), where the original term of rite, in the equations of macrocosm, microcosm and sacrifice, only seems to recede. Although always in the background, the ritual link between man and universe can be taken for granted to such an extent that primary attention may be focused on the ultimate relations between these two terms themselves. The same tendency to draw parallels however continues. Man is a miniature portrait of the universe, his eye is the sun, his breath the atmospheric wind, his food and solid body the earth. But what is his soul, what remains when eye, breath and body have gone? What but the very basis of the universe itself? But what is this soul? And what is the foundation of the Universe?

While Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka could be formally structured by the rites they were expounding and interpreting, no such structure was imposed on the Upaniṣads. They are haphazard collections of fondly remembered contests, disputations, set pieces of

speculations, anecdotes, creation accounts, inventories and classifications of the world and of man, as various and as wide ranging as the minds of these thinkers themselves, pausing and meandering just before the threshold of systematic thought. The oldest and most important of them are either just before the appearance of the Buddha or reflect concerns very much the same as he would harbor.

### III. The Pedigree of the Vedic Texts

To summarize, the Vedas as a whole are first divided into four large groupings, Rg Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda and Atharva Veda. Each of these groupings is further subdivided into śākhās ('branches'). To these 'branches' there generally corresponds a different recension of the saṃhitā ('compilation'), which is the oldest part of the Veda. The Yajur Veda has an additional division into Black and White; these colors have no other meaning than to serve as classifiers.

Linked to the śākhās ('branches') are first the Brāhmaṇas, then the Āraṇyakas, and finally the Upaniṣads. Not all recensions survive, nor have all śākhās developed a complete literature. Closely allied to the Brāhmaṇas are the Śrauta Sūtras, manuals on the performance of the rituals (see Figure 1).

Attached to the principal schools is a secondary literature with which we are not concerned here. Most important in that literature are the Grhya Sūtras, manuals on the practical performance of the domestic ritual (rites of passage, marriage, etc.), and the Dharma Sūtras (rules of correct conduct).

### IV. Kathenotheism

The Vedic religion is correctly described as polytheistic, in the sense that a plurality of gods are addressed, invoked and placated. It is however misleading to conceive of this polytheism as, e.g., that of the Homeric epics. There we find the many gods structured in some kind of a family, with Zeus as the head, each member having a fairly precise function and symbolism--goddesses of marriage, wisdom and sex, gods of the sky, sea and underworld, of beauty, wile and war. Compared with this excessively tidy organization of a complicated pantheon, the polytheism of the Rg Veda seems far more amorphous.

Perhaps the most clearly delineated personality among the Vedic Gods is Indra, to whom a quarter of the Rg Veda is dedicated. He is the most official god of the Vedic pantheon, a divine projection of the Vedic warrior: an awesome champion driving a golden chariot, red-haired and bearded, dining and wining well, though not always wisely, faithful to his allies when they bring him his proper tributes of sacrifices. His great victory is the defeat of the drought, the most dreaded demon

Figure 1: The Vedic Texts

|                        | <u>sākhā</u><br>(branch) | <u>saṃhita</u><br>(compilation) | <u>Brāhmaṇa</u> | <u>Āraṇyaka</u> | <u>Upaniṣad</u> | <u>Śrauta Sūtra</u> |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. <u>Rg Veda</u>      |                          |                                 |                 |                 |                 |                     |
| a. Śakala              | Śakala                   | Aitareya                        | Aitareya        | Aitareya        | Āśvalāyana      |                     |
| b. Bāskala             | Bāskala                  | Kauṣītaki                       | Kauṣītaki       | Kauṣītaki       | Śaṅkhāyana      |                     |
| 2. <u>Yajur Veda</u>   |                          |                                 |                 |                 |                 |                     |
| <u>Black</u>           |                          |                                 |                 |                 |                 |                     |
| a. Kāṭhaka             | Kāṭhaka                  | Kaṭha                           | Kaṭha           | Kaṭha           | Kāṭhaka         |                     |
| b. Maitrāyaṇī          | Maitrāyaṇī               |                                 |                 | Maitrāyaṇī      | Mānava          |                     |
| c. Taittirīya          | Taittirīya               | Taittirīya                      | Taittirīya      | Taittirīya      | Vārāha          |                     |
|                        |                          |                                 |                 | Śvetāśvatara    | Baudhāyana      |                     |
|                        |                          |                                 |                 |                 | Vādhūla         |                     |
|                        |                          |                                 |                 |                 | Bhāradvāja      |                     |
|                        |                          |                                 |                 |                 | Āpastamba       |                     |
|                        |                          |                                 |                 |                 | Hiranyakeśin    |                     |
|                        |                          |                                 |                 |                 | Vaikhānasa      |                     |
| <u>White</u>           |                          |                                 |                 |                 |                 |                     |
| a. Mādhyam̐dina        | Mādhyam̐dina             | } Brhad                         | Śatapatha       | Brhadāraṇyaka   | Kātyāyana       |                     |
| b. Kāṇva               | Kāṇva                    |                                 |                 |                 |                 |                     |
| 3. <u>Sāma Veda</u>    |                          |                                 |                 |                 |                 |                     |
| a. Kauthuma--          | Kauthuma--               | Pañcaviṃśa                      | Āraṇyakasaṃhitā | Chāndogya       | Lāṭyāyana       |                     |
| Rāṇāyanīya             | Rāṇāyanīya               |                                 |                 |                 | Drāhyāyana      |                     |
| b. Jaiminīya           | Jaiminīya                | Jaiminīya                       | Jaiminīya-      | Kena            | Ārṣeyakalpa     |                     |
|                        |                          | Śātyāyana                       | Upaniṣad-       |                 | Jaiminīya       |                     |
|                        |                          |                                 | Brāhmaṇa        |                 |                 |                     |
| 4. <u>Atharva Veda</u> |                          |                                 |                 |                 |                 |                     |
| a. Śaunaka             | Śaunaka                  | } Gopatha                       |                 |                 |                 |                     |
| b. Paippilāda          | Paippilāda               |                                 |                 |                 |                 |                     |
|                        |                          |                                 |                 | Muṇḍaka         | Vaitāna         |                     |
|                        |                          |                                 |                 | Māṇḍūkya        |                 |                     |
|                        |                          |                                 |                 | Praśna          |                 |                     |

of India. This demon encompasses the mountainous monsoon cloud that will not break. This winged mountain of a cloud that may just fly over, leaving utter famine in its wake, is the great enemy of existence, indeed of creation; for its inundating waters, once released, impregnate the earth so that the crops may grow and be harvested. Indra, god of the monsoon, is on a constant foot of war with the cloud that refuses to break; and his great exploit is that he makes it break. Assisted by the Storm gods (gales, lightning, thunder and rain are part of the single monsoon complex), he hurls his thunderbolt at the enemy and breaks its head. With a tremendous roar the mountainous cloud breaks open and the waters are released. The world is rescued, recreated and safe.

We now see in this personality the projection of a warrior mentality on the annual miracle of the monsoon; after the long hot summer, heaven is blocked out by a black mass that holds both threat and salvation. Those who conquered the land after perhaps a millenium of migration from eastern Europe are not satisfied to look upon the annual miracle or calamity of the monsoon as a simple act of god. Rather, they see it as a fierce battle between god and demon, from which the god emerges victoriously. The warriors personify the monsoon as the booty of a great battle. Less confident, less warlike classes are content with looking on Indra as just the rain, and Indra will live on among the populace as just the rain god.

Even while Indra is no doubt the most personable of the Vedic gods, it is remarkable that his central feat is not an entirely individual achievement. Not only is he assisted by the Storm gods, but also by Viṣṇu, still a minor god in the Veda. This points up perhaps the most distinctive tendency in the Vedic pantheon, i.e., names, qualities, exploits and epithets of one god may be attributed to another.

Closely associated with this tendency is the notion of a kind of super god with whom any of the gods may be identified. Repeatedly a major god is praised as the greatest god of all, even though the next hymn might glorify another as the supreme god in very much the same terms. There is, as it were, a divinity on the loose in the Veda whom the priest-poet composers of the hymns caught now in this god, then in another.

This polytheism-with-a-difference, that holds the possibilities of a monotheism, has been called kathenotheism--a monotheism of any which god. This has been described felicitously as 'the god of Monday is God on Monday.' The Vedic poet was himself clearly aware of it:

They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni; or he is the divine fair-winged Bird. The visionaries speak of the One-that-Is in many fashions, they call him Agni, Yama, Wind.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Rg Veda, i, 164, 46.

A similar statement is addressed to Agni, the Fire god:

You, O Agni, are Indra, the Bull of all that exists, you are the twice-striding Viṣṇu, worthy of worship. You, Lord of the Brahman, are the Brahmā priest that finds wealth, you, O Disposer, are joined with liberality.<sup>2</sup>

It is in the same spirit that Yājñavalkya later replies to an old question:

Vidagdha Śākalya, then, questioned him: 'How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya?' He responded with the well-known litany: 'As many as are given in the litany of the invocation of All-the-Gods, three hundred and three, three thousand and three.' 'Surely,' he said, 'but how many exactly, Yājñavalkya?' 'Six,' he said. 'Surely,' he said, 'but how many exactly?' 'Three,' he said.<sup>3</sup>

The final answer is One, whereupon his interlocutor asks how the three hundred and three and three thousand and three relate to this One. Yājñavalkya replies that they are the 'powers' of the one God.

### Summary

Already the Ṛg Vedic material shows that Indian thinkers were not satisfied that any single individual god in the pantheon could be claimed as paramount for long; yet, at the same time, the conviction was growing that there is a paramount god. There was a search for that which is the all-embracing sacred, of which gods are the most immediate manifestations but which transcends them. The search would continue and go into two directions. One would find the supreme being in the power underlying the ritual in which gods and men, heaven and earth participate. The other would move more directly from the kathenotheism of the earlier age and arrive at a monotheism of a god like Viṣṇu (in whom many other gods are combined through the avatāras) or of Śiva, who is no less a collective god of many manifestations. And even when a monotheism is confessed, it is rarely an exclusive one. Ultimately the believer singles out his own god, as his iṣṭadevatā, the god whom he has chosen.

### V. Ritualism and Sacerdotalism

Man must relate to his gods if his gods are to relate to him. The Bhagavad Gītā puts it very neatly:

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2. Ibid., ii, 1, 3.

3. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, iii, 9, 1.



Having created the creatures along with the sacrifice, the Lord of Creatures spoke in the beginning: 'With this sacrifice you shall multiply: it shall be your Cow of Plenty. With it you must make the gods thrive, and the gods must make you thrive; and making one another thrive, you shall attain to the supreme good.'<sup>4</sup>

The way the ancient Indian related to his gods was by action; the gods are invited to partake with him of a banquet. Foodstuffs of many kinds are offered to them: cakes, butter, hot milk, curds, meat, and the juice of the soma. These offerings are made by oblations into the fire, which is the mouth of the gods. After the gods have been feasted, the sacrificer himself partakes of the food. Such are the modest beginnings of what became one of the most significant and far reaching manifestations of Indian religion.

The Vedas, even the oldest parts, are saturated with ritualism. Appropriately the first line of the Ṛg Veda runs:

The Fire I praise, placed in the East, the god-priest of the sacrifice,  
the hotar who most liberally dispenses wealth.

The poets of the Ṛg Veda are in most cases themselves priests who invoke the gods to participate in the rich banquets that their patrons are laying out for them. The priest joins with his patron in feasting the gods so that the gods in turn may prosper him.

This mutual prosperity is the foundation of the world. In the sacrifice, gods and man, yonder world and this world enter into an alliance, which is expressed in the word *ṛtam*. The word can be translated by 'order', but it is to be understood that this order is not something given once and for all like a natural law, but is the result of an alliance that must constantly be reaffirmed. In the older texts, the god Varuṇa presides over this *ṛtam*, closely assisted by the god Mitra, god of contract. But increasingly the sacrifice itself is regarded as the seat of the order, because it is the instrument by which the basic alliance is carried out. The main altar is the 'navel of the order', and it is to this that the world is tied by an umbilical cord. If earlier man could tremble before the face of Varuṇa when he had transgressed the order, aware that Varuṇa knew all his transgressions (for "when two speak together secretly, Varuṇa knows it as the third,") now Varuṇa recedes to the background as the sacrifice itself becomes, not only the instrument, but also the custodian, of the order. So inextricably are the cosmos and the sacrifice woven together that the cosmos itself can be viewed as a sacrifice. "The gods sacrificed the sacrifice with the sacrifice: those were the first manifestations of order (dharma)."

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4. Bhagavad Gītā, iii, 10-11.



But who is the custodian's custodian? Who but the priests? In the period following the compilations of the Vedas, there emerges a vast literature of commentary on the ritual, the Brāhmaṇas. This is a professional literature where priest speaks to priest. The sacrifice, this stylized meal of communion of god and man, is built into a grandiose structure of a complexity and difficulty that requires ever greater specialization on the part of its ministers. Four groups of priest minister to the ritual; in the larger rites there are first, second, third and fourth priests in each group. The sacrificer, though of supreme importance as the patron, hardly participates in his own banquet. Likewise the gods, for whom these feasts were originally intended, become shadowy guests who are there to celebrate an occasion which really has become an end in itself.

These priests, whom from now on we may call brāhmaṇs, are professionals, all of whose life is spent on the performance of the rites for which they were rigorously trained. They traveled from estate to estate, from little court to court, actively competing for the more lucrative sacerdotal posts. And once their selection was made, the often-leisurely ritual would throw priests from different regions together for weeks and sometimes years, and the result was interminable discussion. The Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads are the outcome of these discussions.

We have to keep in mind, when considering the development of thought from the Vedas to the Upaniṣads, that we are following the tradition of specialists who had all gone through a very similar education, who were engaged in the same pursuits, and who had developed a common frame of reference from which the non-specialist was largely excluded. The only exception to this exclusion would be their patrons, generally present on the field of sacrifice where most of the discussion went on, and also their hosts for the duration of the rituals and beyond. These patrons would be the rich barons who had carved out for themselves large estates, chieftains, and petty kings who would compete with one another ritually as well as actively. Their priests added prestige to their establishments, just as they added potency to the more immediate competitions of the Horse Sacrifices and Chariot Race Sacrifices.

Thus their estates and courts became clearing houses for new information--about more recent creations of rituals and also about the speculation which the rituals excited. Hence when we have actual descriptions of conversations, discussions and contests between priests (as for instance in the Upaniṣads), the kings are seen to have an important role in initiating and sometimes even arbitrating the discussion.

## VI. Sacrifice and Cosmos

The Sacrifice now seems to have become an end in itself. Still, basically, it remains the manifestation and the instrument of the alliance of the here-and-now and the world at large both in space and in time. Then, if it is the manifestation

of the alliance, elements of the sacrifice must be relatable directly to the macro-cosmos that it informs. "Om," begins the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, and continues:

the head of the Sacrificial Horse is the Dawn, his eye the Sun, his breath the Wind, his open mouth the Fire, his entirety (Ātman) the Year. The back of the Sacrificial Horse is the Sky, his belly the lower Sky, his under-belly the earth, his sides the regions, his ribs the intermediate regions, his limbs the seasons, the joints the months and fortnights, his foundations the days and nights, his bones the constellations, his flesh the clouds, the sand below him the grass, his entrails the rivers, his liver and lungs the mountains, his hairs the herbs and trees...<sup>5</sup>

Of course, the baroque connections forged here are not to be taken literally, but to be expressive of the one-to-one relationship conceived to exist between the sacrifice and the cosmos.

The Sacrifice is the divine event, the repetition in various forms of the original sacrifice with which the gods sacrificed the sacrifice. But what was this sacrifice? What was sacrificed? This question starts a line of important speculation. One of the conclusions is that the One God himself was sacrificed and that the world was built out of His parts. This God is conceived of in the image of man:

Thousand-headed is this Person, thousand eyed and thousand-footed. Encompassing the world on all sides, he exceeded it by ten fingers... When the gods measured out the sacrifice with the Person as the oblation, Spring was the butter for it, Summer the fuel, Autumn the oblation... When they cut up the Person, in how many parts did they divide him? What was his mouth, what his arms, what do they call his thighs and feet? His mouth became the brāhmaṇ, the arms the kṣatriya, the thighs the vaiśya, and from his feet the śūdra was born.<sup>6</sup>

Crude though the terms may be, we have an ancient expression that the universe is made out of the Primeval Person.

While in the period of the Brāhmaṇas the significance of the old Vedic gods fades, the Sacrifice itself becomes as it were personified in the God Prajāpati, the 'Lord of Creatures.' There is no mythology to speak of attached to his personality, and his function is summed up in his name: he is the creator. The Sacrifice itself, which he personifies, is more and more looked upon as a creative act. It is through

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5. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, i, 1, 1.

6. Rg Veda, x, 90, 1-12.

the Sacrifice that any desire can be realized, that the rains are made to break in time, and a plentiful crop is harvested. The cycle of creation runs in years, and it is due to the increasing emphasis on the creativeness of the rite that we get such equations as the Sacrifice is the Lord of Creatures is the Year.

Another word now comes more to the foreground in the complex of speculations: brahman. The original meaning of the word is much disputed, but from the R̥g Veda onward it has the central meaning of 'sacred word.' It is the solemn utterance by a consecrated person at the appropriate rite, as well as the power inherent in it to bring about the fruits of the rite. It is par excellence the creative word. The speculations about the sacred effectiveness of the word are ancient and often associated with the Syllable: "When the ancient dawns first dawned the Syllable was born in the footstep of the Cow." The Cow is the symbol of all that is good and plentiful in this world--the giver of gifts that sustain creation, but also metaphorically the cloud that sends forth its reviving showers. Likewise it is the symbol of speech and of mother earth itself. Thus, Speech brought forth at the dawn of creation the Syllable, the first bit of speech that can be spoken, and also the measure of the poetic and creative utterance that moves in syllables.

There is an ancient conception of the world that views a thing not in the Aristotelean manner as both form and content, but as 'name-and-form'. The name of a thing belongs to its very nature; hence by knowing its name one gets hold of the thing itself. Thus the magic applications where pronouncing the name of a god brings a measure of control over him. Thus also the linguistic speculations in many Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣad passages where, in the name of a god, a metre, a rite, or in a word like satyam ('the True'), clues are being sought as to his or its real nature. If anything has these two aspects, that of substance and that of name, the world itself must have the same double nature: there must be a name to the world, as there is a name to everything. The epitome of all speech, 'brahman,' is as it were the name of the universe, the verbal counterpart of the substance of the universe.

To the variety of the products of creation corresponds the variety of sacred speech; brahman then may sum up the entire erudition of the Vedic priest, the R̥g Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda, Atharva Veda and Epic which become manifest as the world itself becomes manifest. Sacred speech is not created, it comes into being with the world itself, out of the unmanifest that was before. This notion will live on. The seers whose names are transmitted with Vedic hymns did not actually compose them but were the ones who 'saw' them at the dawn of the world.

The brahman, then, which fits the world as its form fits a substance, which is the powerful secret name of the universe, creates by being pronounced--it is the Lord of Creatures who pronounces it. Many accounts have it that the world came into being by being formulated. The Lord of Creatures pronounces the names of the three worlds (bhūḥ bhuvaḥ svaḥ), and earth, atmosphere and heaven are there.

Often the more simple term *vāc* ('speech') is used, and as this word is feminine, the Lord of Creatures and Speech are often viewed as a divine couple who together engender the universe.

But this brahman, this verbal counterpart of the substance of the universe, is manifest. There must be a prior state of it that is unmanifest from which it has emerged. This is the Supreme Brahman, also identified with the Great Syllable 'Om'. The terms are losing now their ancient associations with sacred speech per se. The Supreme Brahman is the very creativeness that has brought forth the world; it is the foundation of the universe, just as it underlies the power of the Sacrifice. It is the ultimate cause of everything.

How did the world come into being? There are a number of different accounts that begin to converge into a few. The divine Carpenter put the world together with wood, but this wood is really Brahman. The mythic progenitors, Dakṣa and Aditi, engendered it, but this couple may be interpreted as the Lord of Creatures and his consort Speech, and "as far as speech stretches, so far stretches Brahman." It was created out of the dismembered parts of the Primeval Person when he was sacrificed at the primeval act. But this Person is no other than the Lord of Creatures. Or (and this is a speculation that comes to converge with the others) originally there was the non-existent, the not-yet-manifest, out of which the Existent (*sat*) arose as the famous hymn of creation has it.

Darkness was there, wrapped up in darkness, in the beginning;  
all this was a yet unaccidented ocean.<sup>7</sup>

In the void an embryo emerges, a desire takes shape which is the first germ of will. Out of the *tyad*, the *yon*, the *sat* is born which exists here and now. They can be summed up in the one formula *Satyam*, the 'true', which is the name of the all encompassing Brahman. And it is this miracle of manifestation and creation that is continually repeated and reaffirmed in the Act of Sacrifice.

## VII. Man

The question 'What is Man?' always involves two other questions-- 'From where did he come?' and 'Where does he go?' The oldest texts were not at all preoccupied with the questions of nature, origin and destiny of man. There prevailed a simple, happy attitude that found life full of rewards: the pleasures of power, the joys of battle, warlike sons; and the dearest wish, perhaps, was to live out a hundred autumns. If one died, one somehow survived in a hereafter that was not very different from the

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7. Rg Veda, x, 129, 3.



present life. One joined the Fathers, or the deceased ancestors, and continued in some measure to participate in the world through the ancestral offerings that were incumbent on one's progeny. The origin of man was wound up with the origin of the entire world; the creation of man was not singled out as worthy of description in a special myth.

To be sure, the oldest literature is a class literature of the barons and the priests they patronized. It represents a confidence of the great of the land, that no doubt was justified. However we should picture the early history of Āryan settlement in Northern India. It is clear from later sources that it was a highly successful one. Splitting off from the fraternal tribes that remained in Iran, the Indo-Aryans entered the Panjāb from Afghanistan, settled in the Land of the Five Streams, pushed eastward into the land of the Two Rivers, the Jamnā and the Ganges, and down the Gangetic basin. This is the area that in later literature will remain known as the Āryāvarta, the Realm of the Āryans, and Brahmāvarta, the Realm of Brahman.

They must have been extremely competent warriors who had survived the incredibly long overland trek from central and eastern Europe down to central Asia and through the Middle East. They had preserved their language in a very antique form, in spite of the many contacts and, surely, battles in numberless encounters with other peoples. Their trek was far from over; it would not come to a stop until the entire Indian continent was brought within their sphere, and eventually one of the civilizations they were to found would continue eastward to Further India and Indonesia.

The cohesion that had kept them together evolved into a strong sense of society. A viable community was conceived of as an interplay of different but complementary social classes: that of the barons or kṣatriyas, of the priests who will come to be called the brāhmaṇs, of the vaiśya yeomen who breed cattle and raise crops; and of the rather more amorphous group of śūdras, outsiders, outside the ritual communion of the twice-born, subjected to a state of servitude.

Man saw himself in the first place as a member of this society in which he had to fulfill the duties to which his birth entitled him. The System of the Four Classes had no doubt always been more of a model than a description of the society as it was. Nevertheless, if it did not create, at least it expressed, the social conviction that a man was in the first place a social being. This being was generated through a number of rites that started with the moment of conception through birth to the moment when childhood was over and the man-to-be was ready for his second birth.

In the presence of the eternal fire, an older person, a guru--a father or uncle--would formally initiate him by placing on him the sacrificial thread (slung over the left shoulder and below the right arm, so as to keep the sword arm unencumbered),

and the guru would whisper in his ear the ancient prayer for wisdom: "We desire that covetable gift of the God who impels us, who must further our thoughts." This initiation would begin a period of study in which the Vedas were meticulously memorized and retained for later transmission to one's own sons or pupils. After this study, the man would marry and settle down, until he was sated of days. According to the ideal scheme, he would then retire outside the immediate cultivated area of a village, or an estate, as a 'forest-dweller', but still retain at least his family ties.

Again, this life was more of a model than a reality; but it expressed the meaningfulness of being a part of a family and through it of a larger society with which one was in ritual communion. Our later sources, dealing as they do exclusively with the ritual, no doubt distort our picture of the lack of individuality of men. When we come to the Great Epic of the Mahābhārata (c. 400 B.C. and later, but resting on far older bardic recitations), individuals stand out with a forceful and clear personality for which the ritual texts did not prepare us.

In the ritual texts man appears as a hieratic shade, bent upon the exacting task of the rite itself. There he appears as the Sacrificer, the Yajamāna. A curious development had taken place in the sponsorship of the rite. Whereas a number of the rites are clearly public in origin (rites that have to be held at sunrise and sundown, to strengthen the sun for his two daily journeys; at New Moon and Full Moon to help the moon through its phases; at the beginning of the seasons; and at the beginning of a new annual cycle), still the texts assign them to individual patrons who select their priests and to whom the fruits of the rites accrue. The principal soma sacrifice is to be held by a patron who wishes for heaven; yet it is at least doubtful that this fully expresses the original intention of the rite.

Although the Yajamāna, the Sacrificer, is a specific individual, when he is involved in his rite, he is the epitome of all men. As the ritualistic speculations develop, we see that side by side with the two principal terms, the cosmos and the sacrifice, a third term begins to be introduced, that of the sacrificer himself. It is not only the sacrifice that is in the closest communion with the cosmos, that generates the power which keeps the cosmos going ("if one does not perform the agnihotra at dawn, the sun will not come up"), now it is also man himself. Man constitutes himself a microcosm that mirrors the macrocosm. If the fire is the sun, so is a man's eye the sun, his breath is the wind, his hair the forests.

All this was anticipated. We have seen how in the myth of the Primeval Person, the universe created out of his dismembered limbs was, as it were, personalized. The sacrifice-universe is personalized in the Lord of Creatures. But from now on the man-universe homology is on the ascendant and will to a large extent dominate the speculations of the late-Brāhmaṇa, early-Upaniṣad period.



However, there were men who had another image of themselves than that of a member of a family, class and society. There were ecstasies and ascetics who stood apart from the well-ordered society. They are the long-haired ones, the keśins.

The long-haired one carries the fire, carries the poison, carries heaven and earth, the long-haired one is called the light. The ascetics (munis) are girt by the wind (go nude), or they wear dirty yellow robes. They follow the race-course of the wind, where the gods have gone. We, ecstatic with our asceticism, have overtaken the winds. Ye mortals only see our bodies.<sup>8</sup>

Elsewhere they feel as though they float in the sky, and earth is no more than a mote in their eyes. They are the professionals of tapas (self-mortification) in order to generate in their minds and bodies powers unattainable by other men, powers that are as creative as--if not more creative than--the Brahman of the sacrifices. Their motivations remain unclear. Are they related to the shamanistic tremblers (vipra) that are known in the Veda as priests? Do they seek out intoxicant or psychedelic drugs, one of which seems to have been provided by the soma draught? Are they of a different 'religion'? Answers remain unsatisfactory. But when one views the evolution of religious practices (which may not be evolution at all, but simply social and textual recognition), especially in early Jainism and Buddhism but also in the Mahābhārata and later, the conclusion is unavoidable that this self-image as a superior un beholden unsocial ecstatic in search of uncommon experiences was a most powerful one. We shall see it converge in Upaniṣadic thought.

### VIII. Creation

The parallelism between macrocosm and microcosm, between universe and man, is so complete now that not only can the world at large be viewed in the image of man, but also the creation of the world can be viewed as the creation of man. In early forms of the philosophical school of Sāṅkhya, the evolution of the 'world' is really the evolution of the Primeval Man, from the higher mental faculties down to the senses that call forth the origination of the material universe. It will remain for long a characteristic of Indian thought that things can be made intelligible in terms of a hierarchy and an evolution. And the hierarchies and evolutions that are detected in nature at large can be applied to make man intelligible, and those detected in man can be applied to make the universe intelligible.

Indian thought liked to see the world in patterns of three. We noticed the three social classes of brāhmaṇ, kṣatriya and vaiśya, onto which is joined the

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8. Rg Veda, x, 136.

residual class of the śūdras. In the phases of life we have that of the Student, the Householder and the Forest-dweller, unto which is joined the residual class of the Ascetic. The basic seasons are three: Summer, Rains, and Harvest. The basic layers of the universe are similarly three: heaven, atmosphere, and earth. These triads can be further refined or differently referred to: they may be Sun, Wind and Sacrificial (i.e., earthly) Fire; or Summer Heat, Water and Food. All these threesomes can be ordered hierarchically; they can also be ordered chronologically.

What, or who, is the original source of the world? More refined answers are possible, now that the personal structure of the universe has been discovered. In the first place it is certain that the gross is always preceded by the subtle and fine, for we see that a large tree arises from a tiny seed. The seed itself may further be divided until we come to its last analysis beyond which it is irreducible. The world must have started from the final irreducible. What is it? Several answers are possible, depending on the viewpoint one takes. If one looks upon the world as a working universe, its irreducible principle is that which makes it work, the final foundation; thus Brahman may be this final dynamic principle, or tapas. This is the vitality of the world. Similarly the human person has his principle of vitality, his life, his breath. Nothing can have being unless it has this vitality. Or, one may look upon the world as we now behold it as an unfolding from an original primeval principle; we can look for causes and finally for the cause of causes. Groping back to the moment of creation we come to the point of time where the now was the not-yet, as in our own history there was a moment at which we were conceived.

The old speculations of the non-existent, or the not-yet-existent, are pertinacious. "Utterly nothing at all was here in the beginning. This was enveloped by death, by hunger," it reads in the beginning of the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad. Death here is non-life, but again with the connotation of not-yet life. For at once this death, this not-yet, conceives a desire: "It made the plan: 'I will be a person.'" Thereupon "he divided himself into three, himself, the sun, and the wind," corresponding in the regular triadic pattern to sun, wind, and earth; or heaven, sky and earth; or summer, rains and harvest. Here, then, creation is the emanation, out of the primeval not-yet, of the Universe which is also the Year. But simultaneously another solution is offered, not competitive but optional: "It desired: 'Let a second self to me be born.'" With this plan, it copulated with Speech, this death, this hunger." We recall Speech here as a principle of creation. "His seed became the Year. Before that there had been no year. He carried this Year for the duration of a year. And at the end of this period he delivered it."<sup>9</sup> Now the cosmos, which is the Year of the three worlds and the three seasons, is born from an act of self-impregnation.

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9. Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, i, 2, 1-4.

A contiguous account, with an obvious family resemblance, reads:

The Ātman was here in the beginning, in the form of a person. Looking around, he saw nothing but himself. 'This is I,' he spoke at the beginning. Thus the name I came into being.... He was afraid; therefore anyone who is alone is afraid. Then he thought: 'Since I am alone, of whom should I be afraid?' ...Still, he was not happy. That is why someone who is alone is not happy. He desired a mate. He became as big as a man and a woman embracing. He caused himself to fall apart into two: thus were born husband and wife--that is why Yājñavalkya said 'We are each just half a whole.' <sup>10</sup>

The creator embarks upon creation until by couples he had created everything "down to the ants--he created it all. Then he knew: 'I am this creation, for I have created all this.' Thus creation came to be."

Another nearby section reads more impersonally: "All this here was first undivided. It was divided into names-and-forms: that one is this by name, he has such form," a beautiful summary of the name-and-substance composite to which we referred above. But then at once this impersonal account of the creation of the world is personalized: "He is entered into this world down to the tips of the nails." It is a refrain: the creator, however he started, literally pervades his creation to the last extensions. The creator--and this is an important point--completes himself in creation. The text continues:

they don't see him--he is encased in the creation like a razor in its case. For he is incomplete: just by breathing he becomes breath, by speaking he becomes speech; by seeing, eye; by speaking, ear; by thinking, mind. These are the names of functions of his. If one identifies one function with him, one does not know. For by any one function he is incomplete. One should identify him with the complete personality, for in it all functions become one. <sup>11</sup>

This theme is resumed after a few sections.

The Ātman was here in the beginning, quite alone. He desired, 'Let there be a wife to me, then I can procreate, then I have possessions, then I can do my tasks.' Indeed, this encompasses

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10. Ibid., i, 4, 1-3.

11. Ibid., i, 4, 7.

all desire: no one desiring will find any more to desire. As long as one does not obtain them all one by one, one thinks oneself incomplete.<sup>12</sup>

These quotations, which belong to the oldest strata of the Upaniṣads, have clearly an attitude in common: there is a desire on the part of the creator to fulfill himself, to complete and bring fullness to himself. Creation is literally a self-expression: "This is I." A self-impregnation or self-recognition: "Then he knew, 'I am this creation.'" Here, then, we still have a positive view of this world: it is the unfolding out of a primitive and primeval beginning into the wholly and fully manifested, which is in its entirety pervaded by that which originally informed it. Unmanifest and manifest, the not-yet and the now, are still continuous, and manifestation is not deterioration.

In the face of the other, and in the end prevailing emphases on the created world as a minus, from which escape is requisite, this emphasis on creation as a fulfilment of an unfulfilled creator deserves notice. The account just quoted is significant in its wording: the uncreated Ātman desires to have a wife, in order to procreate, so as to have possessions, and acquit himself of his ritual tasks. It is the expression of a dharma mentality, which looks upon this world as essentially a good one where the responsibly social man fulfills himself for the well-being of the world--lokasaṃgrahāya, as the Bhagavad Gītā will say, "in order to keep the world together."

It is, in sum, the expression of the dharma ethic which the ancient sense of society had prepared and which had been reinforced by the ritualists. The creator himself still wants to live in this world--a confidence, as far as can be seen, that was never quite dispelled in brāhmaṇism.

## IX. Soul

The search for an ultimate and irreducible principle that is both the source and the vitality of the universe is now increasingly complemented by the quest for a similar principle that underlies the human personality. The notion of personal immortality was given since the Veda. There must be some entity that survives after death and reaps the rewards of the rites the person had so assiduously and so optimistically undertaken during his lifetime.

Among the various speculations on what we shall call the soul, two closely related ones stand out. One is the 'contest between the organs', the other the

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12. Ibid., i, 4, 17.



structuring of consciousness and unconsciousness. It is told that the organs quarreled between themselves over who was the most important among them, and in order to prove their superiority each one left the body and then returned to see how it had fared. Eyesight left it and discovered that the person had continued living, although without seeing. The same happened with the other organs. Finally, as 'breath' (prāṇa) was about to leave, it became clear the person would die. To the question, 'how many organs can one spare and still live?', the answer had been made clear: the breath of life itself is the ultimate principle of existence.<sup>13</sup>

The answer does not entirely satisfy; for earlier speculation had placed the breath on a level with the wind and atmosphere in the macrocosmic hierarchy. Now it is discovered that there is a 'higher' breath--not just the breathing of daily life, but a vitality that survives death.

The attention turns to consciousness. The senses through which we experience life have been assigned a high place among the faculties that sustain existence. They are the portals of knowledge through which an I is conscious of the world as well as itself. But this consciousness itself seems to be structured in some sort of hierarchy. What happens when we lose consciousness? When we fall asleep, our senses cease functioning, yet consciousness remains in some form or other. For even when we have no direct experience of the world around us, conscious life goes on in the form of dreams. If the experience of wakeful life may be taken as the fullest manifestation, the consciousness of dream life, marking a less manifest phase, may well be considered a prior state of consciousness. And then we have the phenomenon of sleep so deep that even dreams cannot cross the threshold of consciousness. Nevertheless, consciousness cannot be said to have disappeared however much it was in abeyance, for we are conscious that we have slept, and after sleep we are conscious as before. Can there be a fourth state, less manifest perhaps than this consciousness of the coma, which gives up even this last manifestation of belonging to a single individual, and which is potential consciousness per se?

Vitality, consciousness, are they vested in a final entity that possesses them? Is there something of which it can be said that it has this vitality and this consciousness? And if it pervades all conscious and living beings, would it not pervade the whole of creation? This question is the more urgent since microcosm and macrocosm are so obviously in each other's image. Creation as a whole can be conceived as the self-creation of a primeval person who is as much the archetype as the prototype of man.

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13. Ibid., iv, 1. 7-13.

In this city of Brahman which is the body, there is a tiny lotus which forms a dwelling place; in it there is a tiny inner space. That which is contained inside it, that must be searched for, that must be studied....As vast as is the common space outside, so vast is the inner space within, both heaven and earth are contained therein, both fire and wind, both sun and moon, lightning and constellations, whatever is of this world and whatever is not, all that is contained therein. If they were to ask: 'If everything is contained in this city of Brahman, all creatures and all objects of desire, then when old age presses upon it or when it expires, what is left of it?' then one should reply: 'That one does not age with the aging of the body, it is not killed with the killing of the body. This city of Brahman is true, in it are contained all objects of desire. It is the Ātman, pure of all evil, unaging, undying, without pain, hunger and thirst, all of whose desires have come true, all of whose intentions have been achieved. Just as in this world the domain won by acts decays, even so in the hereafter the domain won by virtue decays. Those who go about without having searched out in this world the Ātman and these true objects of desire, they will not move at will in all worlds. But those who in this world have searched out the Ātman and these true objects of desire, they will wander at will in all worlds.<sup>14</sup>

The last principle then, when found, gives the one who found it both the realization of all desires and complete freedom. It is a doctrine more and more insisted upon: the final principle that animates and informs the universe is that which animates and informs the human person; it has ultimate consciousness, vitality, bliss and freedom.

Here we find already a downgrading of the reality of life and world as we know it. The domain which we won in this world by our acts will decay; the domain which we won in the hereafter by our virtue will decay. Only that which is 'true' will not decay. This 'true' is what is underivably and unalterably true. It is that from which all other phenomena derive a contingent reality. But it is not yet separated from the world as we know it; it pervades it. Conversely, when one has searched it out, one merges into it as in an ocean. Thus Uddālaka instructs his son Śvetaketu as follows:

For instance, my son, bees collect honey by plucking the juices of all kinds of trees and then make the juice come to a oneness. The juices no longer know their distinctiveness: 'I am the juice

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14. Chāndogya Upaniṣad, viii, 1, 1-6.



of this tree or that tree,' in the same way, my son, all these creatures no longer know their distinctiveness when they have been united with the Existent--all they know is that they have been united with the Existent... That is the very fineness of the nature of which all this is, it is the true, it is the Ātman: you are that, Śvetaketu. <sup>15</sup>

It is the source as well as the sustaining principle of life. Uddālaka orders his son:

'Bring a banyan fruit.' 'Here it is, sir.' 'Break it.' 'It is broken, sir.' 'What do you see inside?' 'Rather tiny seeds, sir.' 'Split one of them now.' 'It is split, sir.' 'What do you see inside?' 'Nothing, sir.' He said to him: 'It is by virtue of this very fineness which you cannot see that this banyan tree stands in all its size. Trust me, my son. This is the very fineness of the nature of which all this is, it is the true, it is the Ātman: you are that, Śvetaketu.' <sup>16</sup>

But if this principle is one, what makes us understand that in each living being it is manifested differently? If there is one consciousness, how can each of us be separately conscious? The questions are raised, but not conclusively answered. One text has it that the individual consciousnesses fly off the original consciousness as sparks fly off a fire. Or perhaps we should look upon each soul as a component of this all-soul, which however in its fullness vastly transcends the souls that exist in and of it.

An important trend continues that stresses the transcendancy of the supreme being and underemphasizes and even deprecates the manifest world. Now the world is not the self-completion of a primeval being that feared its solitude and felt not complete until it had expanded itself. On the contrary, only in its solitude does it have its full plenitude; only in its solitude does it have bliss.

This large Ātman without beginning consists as consciousness in the organs. He dwells in the inner space in the heart, master of all, lord of all, overlord of all. He does not grow through good acts nor shrink through bad acts. He is the universal lord, sovereign of creatures, protector of creatures. He is the dam that separates, lest these worlds become confused. It is him that the brāhmaṇs seek

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15. Ibid., vi, 9, 1-4.

16. Ibid., vi, 12, 1-3.

to know by their study of the Veda, by rite, gift, mortification and fasting. Only by knowing him does one become an ascetic (muni), only by desiring his world do the wanderers depart from their homesteads. Indeed, it is just because they knew that the old masters did not desire offspring: what shall we do with offspring, who have this Ātman, this world? And rising from the desire for sons, for wealth and for power they thereupon lived as mendicants. He is this? Not, Not. He is unseizable, for he is not seized; indestructible, for he is not destroyed; detached, for he is not attached; unbound, he does not hurt, does not suffer. Neither of the two affect him, whether he has done good or has done evil: he himself transcends them. Neither act nor failure to act aggrieve him.<sup>17</sup>

Here then at last clearly stated, along with the complete supremacy of the soul, is the convergence of the tradition of the long-haired ascetics and ecstasies on one hand and the tradition of brāhmaṇical thought on the other.

Any brief exposé of Upaniṣadic notions concerning the soul cannot help being brusque and kaleidoscopic. The final positions have not yet been taken; that will be the task of later philosophy. But the seeds of many of the divergent developments lie already contained in the speculations of the Upaniṣads.

#### X. The Year and the Cycle of Life

At this point, when we seem to have left for good the esoteric speculations about cosmos and universe, when it seems as though enough new starting points have been opened for thought to take off in new directions, we must revert to the earlier notions that directly grew out of sacrificial concerns.

In passing we noticed the apparently bizarre notions that were entertained about the Year. The sacrifice gets identified with it; it is almost a refrain that the Lord of Creatures, this personalized god-rite, is equal to the Year. We have taken to capitalizing the word because it is not so much the natural year that it stands for, as it is a basic conception of the rhythm of time.

All ritual is essentially recurrent, and it recurs at set times with equal distances. This is most obvious in the daily rites, the lunar rites, the seasonal rites. Here at every time a set unit of time is taken as the cycle of recurrence. Day follows day, lunar phase upon the next one, season after season. These cycles, however complete

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17. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, iv, 4, 22.

in themselves, have their being in a greater cycle, that of the year.

The symbolism of the Year that makes time intelligible is hardly peculiar to ritualist Indian thought. Even today we measure our lifetime in years. We superimpose the mechanistic rhythm of the recurrence of birthdays upon the far more irregular rhythm of our growth. We still celebrate New Year's Eve into New Year as though something stupendous were happening. It is always the new year, not simply the next year. The old folklore of making new year's resolutions persists; as though our slates could be wiped clean and we could start all over again. With ritual occurrence the annual cartoons appear, showing the old year out like an aged man who has lived his life, bearded and often pictured with the scythe of death, leaving behind an optimistically bubbling baby, eager to do it all over again.

We measure our history by years; thus India became independent from Britain 1,947 years after the birth of Christ. We may abbreviate them by hundreds and speak of centuries, but we say 1947, not 47% of the twentieth century. Punctiliously every year there is the papal blessing *urbi et orbe*, the presidential State of the Union message and the Trooping of the Colours. Progress is measured by matching one year's output with that of the previous year. Budgets run annually, and contracts are made by the year. For those who believe, the Calendar of the Church has an immediate propriety. Once every year the birth of Christ must be celebrated, his passion mourned, his resurrection feasted. There is an annual Day of Atonement.

There is something so basic to this measure that it seems unnatural to question its validity. On the contrary, larger units have something unnatural about them. When one reads of four or five year plans, there is an immediate sense of emergency--the natural unit of the Year had to be overridden for an immediately urgent task to be taken in hand for an ad-hoc cut of time.

Larger units of time have an artificiality about them, unless they are simply tens or multiples of tens. Decade, century, millenium have their convenience. Multiples of five may occasionally do for specific events: twenty-five years of marriage are worth celebrating, as is the seventy-fifth anniversary of a University. But they all start from the Year.

Below the Year, measures are irregular. There are twelve months, fifty-two weeks and 365 days. Among them, the twelve months have an individuality, but far less than the four seasons. Weeks don't even have names. It is when we come to the day that we have an individual that may stand up to the Year. Every day has a night to it, which cannot be said of the year now, although mankind long held to a suspenseful thirteenth month. And the day has its seasons of morning, noon, evening and midnight. Brief periods are measured by the unit of the day.

While the idiom might find it possible for everything to have its year, common wisdom has found that everything has its day.

It should not, therefore, be too difficult to understand out of our experience the creative and existential importance of Year as a measure. If day is too short, the week is too vague, months are too serial, and seasons too expectant of one another. Time comes full circle only every year.

Genesis has it that God created the world in seven days. In this mediterranean context this week is no doubt equal to the Indian creation-in-a-Year. For the seven days of the week represent the seven planets that between them govern the march of the year. Just as the incubation period of the creation of Genesis' God was a week, so the incubation of the Indian creation, according to the Brāhmaṇas, lasts for a year. We saw how Nothing-Yet, or Death, or Hunger, bore his second self for the space of a year. While more confident authors may have creation start with the spoken word that calls the world into being, common sense recognizes that for anything to be finished it takes an identifiable length of time. This time is the Year.

Later Indian texts tell the story in retrospect. There is a Purāṇic architecture of space that measures the worlds up and down Mount Meru in the center of earth; this architecture has given to the Far East the architecture of the pagoda. But there is an architecture of time. Just as space pulsates from world to world or from continent to continent, so time pulsates. There is a time in which the universe is measured, and the measure of time is the life of Brahmā the Creator. Like any person's, his life is measured in days and nights. During his day, the world exists; during his sleep, the world is in abeyance. It is not hard to recognize in this pulsation the old ideas about the day of consciousness and the night of withdrawal to some pristine state of more-than-consciousness. The architects of time, those who implement a geography of time that was conceived long before, do not leave it at this. The astronomical numbers multiply. A day of Brahmā is just 4,320,000 years --or, given the Indian factor of a crore or ten million, the product of three (seasons) times the number of months in the year squared. If twelve is a year, twelve times twelve is the grand Year; three times that is the YEAR. The day of Brahmā comprises a thousand Large Ages of 4,320,000 years, each of which equal 12,000 divine years, which brings us back to the tidy total of 360, the ancient number of days in the Year.

This is only partly an exercise in arithmetic. What it shows is the incredible persistence of a measure of time that starts from the unit of the year. Once we have a day of Brahmā, we can multiply his years by 360, and multiply his life by a hundred such years, and we arrive at a total so stupendous that it reminds us of the space age; but still, we are only talking of multiples of the year.



Then, between the Year as the Sacrifice and the year as the basic factor of the lifetime of the universe, there is only the step of numbers. Multiply the number of months in the year by itself, and multiply the product by the number of seasons, and we get the factor of Time itself. Time has been understood in its basic mechanics. Time is *kāla*, the calculator and the calculated.

To get back to the age we are dealing with, counting is the spirit of the age. Things come by threes, but also by fives, and occasionally by fours. Not far off is the time when the elements that go into the making of the spatial universe will be similarly counted and inventoried. And very near at hand is the time that man's life span itself is made a factor in a product of multiplication.

The world as we know it is the multiplication of the One Supreme. He made himself into two, and all the other multiplications started from this simple beginning. Or, he might elect to abide by the factor of three, and creation is a product of triplication. Or, again, it may be by a factor of five, and the world is any number of squares of quintuplicates. The factors do not matter much; what seems to matter is a way of thinking that can conceive of multiples in the terms of products. Every product can be reduced to a basic multiple, into which, two, three, four or five, the Supreme had willed to divide itself.

Is man an exception to the pattern that is the most parsimonious explanation of the universe? Indian thought had never excepted man from the rest of creation. Even where creation starts from a creator conceived in man's image, the creation of man is but one of his several interests. An old account of the beginning of life wipes the slate of life clean, as in the tale of the Flood. Manu, only partly the Indian Noah, is warned of a coming flood by a fish, whom he had fostered since it was a guppy. The fish, grown now to the size of a whale, seizes Manu's ark with its own horn, and places it on a mountain. As the primeval waters subside, Manu makes an oblation into them, and woman is born. The woman becomes a verbal blessing, to be uttered in the middle of the sacrifice, and by virtue of this blessing everything is created. Once more the Word has been creative.

A younger account has the following story:

Brahman was here in the beginning, maybe (*vā*). It knew itself: 'I am Brahman.' From that everything came to be. To what thought any of the gods woke up, that he became, thus anyone of the seers, and of men. Seeing this, the seer *Vāmadeva* asserted, 'I have become Manu, and Sun.' Thus, whoever right now knows the same, 'I am Brahman,' he becomes all this, and not even the gods can rule that he is not, for he himself is the *Ātman* of them. He who equates another deity, saying 'he is one, I am another,' he does not know. He is like an animal for the gods. And just as many animals use up



one man, so any one man uses up as many gods. If one animal is taken (to be immolated), nothing good comes from it; let alone when many animals are. Therefore it is no good to them that people know this.<sup>18</sup>

What is the difference then between god, men and animals except that they are structured in some kind of pyramid? The Ātman who was in the beginning, and then was afraid, and then was unhappy, coupled with the woman he separated out of himself, and men were born. Realizing that this was incest, she hid. She became a cow, he a bull; and cows were born. Then a mare and a stallion, and the horse was born. And so on down to the ants.

Man is no exception to the rest of the world. Multiplication starts from the One, and if the products multiplied include man, so it includes all others. Man, like the rest of nature is essentially multipliable. If this is so, then does man go by seasons, just as the herd goes? A cow may die, but it has produced its calf. So obviously man continues the creator's work by multiplying himself; there are passages that clearly state that man regenerates himself in his offspring. But similarly, the herd renews itself tirelessly. 'Do you know, ' is the famous question, 'why the world above is never filled up?' Do you know, in other words, why mankind keeps replenishing itself from a fairly constant total? The answer, fateful for the rest of Indian thought, is that most men come back. But there are some who do not. Time is the endlessly multipliable year, but not all in time have to be of the Year.

## XI. Transmigration

So significant has the philosopheme of transmigration become for Indian thought, Buddhist, Jain as well as brāhmaṇ, that it seems surprising it arrived so late. The Vedic literature is innocent of it until the very last portions of one of the later Brāhmaṇas. And then, astonishingly, it is stated not as 'rebirth' but as 'redeath.' This inauspicious evaluation of life as death will occupy us later.

This total absence of the concept in the earlier literature of the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas has led scholars (who overrated the representativeness of this literature for all the religious needs and goals of those who lived in India at the time) to assume that the doctrine of rebirth had its genesis in non-Vedic circles (which may be true) and therefore in non-Āryan circles (which is impervious to proof). One can no doubt draw in illustrations of migrations of the soul in primitive cultures, and for those who believe that comparison is reason, this might be satisfactory. Much has

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18. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, i, 4, 10.

also been made of the fact that this doctrine played such an important role in Buddhism and Jainism, soteriologies advanced not by 'brāhmaṇs' but by 'kṣatriyas'. Although overstated, this view cannot be entirely ignored. In an ancient account in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, a kingly expositor of rebirth somewhat proudly maintains that before this the doctrine had not yet penetrated to the brāhmaṇs.

Not too much importance should be attached to this declaration. As we have seen, the little courts of the patrons of sacrifices were the obvious clearing houses of new information about rituals and their philosophies for brāhmaṇs who were either selected for, or attracted by, the grand ceremonies that were conducted. The local baron presiding over discussions (Janaka in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Chāndogya Upaniṣads is an excellent case in point) would be in the prestigious position of explaining to a newly arrived brāhmaṇ what earlier sessions with other priests had so far established. And one may safely assume that the image of the ignorant brāhmaṇ was a very old one in folklore.

If then it is impossible to suppose a philosophical society of kṣatriyas hermetically closed from that of the brāhmaṇs, it is worth attempting to understand the doctrine of transmigration in terms equally familiar to the brāhmaṇs.

One early response to the problem of rebirth, or as it is still called, redeath, is in the familiar terms of the Brāhmaṇa literature: "He who knows this (that is, the mystical correlations between the sacrificial horse and the universe) conquers redeath." Evident is still the magical assumption that knowledge is power, but it is significant to note that a peculiar kind of knowledge is needed to overcome transmigration. A particular rite is no longer automatically effective.

It is therefore knowledge transcending the rite that is demanded of one who wishes to escape transmigration. Since the Brāhmaṇas are solely interested in the knowledge of the rite, we should not expect them to exhibit any interest in this other realm of speculation. Rather, we would expect this interest to be shown in those texts that deal with matters beyond ritual--the Upaniṣads. The most elaborate account is found in the fifth chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, where transmigration is presented as an esoteric doctrine. It is noteworthy that there is nothing 'popular' about the doctrine; rather it is presented as the outcome of advanced speculations. This does not seem to accord well with the hypothesis that the doctrine began from primitive, perhaps even aboriginal beliefs.

After his studies with his famous father Uddālaka, Śvetaketu visits a king who asks him a number of riddles to which he does not know the answer. Indignantly he returns to his father who also fails to give the answer. Uddālaka, the father, then goes to the king and submits to him as a student. Pressed, the king states the doctrine. There are three kinds of beings; the third kind is that which obeys the harsh command of Live! Die!--the lower animals and insects who have no immortality whatsoever.

It is of the other orders of creatures that the text particularly speaks.

After death, the souls embark upon either one of two courses: they may go the Way of the Gods, or the Way of the Deceased Ancestors. The first are those who 'in the forest contemplate on austerities and faith,' the second are those 'who in the village contemplate upon stipend and rituals.' This announces two notions that will remain inextricably coupled with transmigration and release. In order to pursue release, one must have retired from the active life of 'the village' or everyday society. The pursuit of ordinary ritual concerns is not conducive to release.

Of particular interest in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad account is that the transmigration itself is viewed completely as part of the common cycle of life in nature. The souls on their way to achieving release enter the 'flame' (no doubt the cremation fire) and pass from there to the day, bright fortnight, the six months of the northern course of the sun, and from there the year. We have noted the importance of the Year as the time symbol of creation. The souls thus proceed from the diversified units of time (days, fortnights, etc.) to the original unit of time itself--a process of reversal that will remain characteristic of release practices. Thereupon the souls transcend the Year, and proceed to the higher luminaries, sun, moon and lightning, whereupon a 'non-human person' conducts them to Brahman. Central here is the fact that the Year is transcended as the cyclic symbol.<sup>19</sup>

The other souls, who go the Way of the Ancestors, do not reach the Year. From the six months of the southern course of the sun they go to the pitṛloka (ancestors), eventually arrive at the moon, a kind of ritual moon, which contains the soma of the sacrificers. Having sojourned there they become sky, wind, smoke, mist and cloud, and finally rain down. The raindrops become grains and plants; and if they are eaten by a man he impregnates his woman with the returning soul.<sup>20</sup>

Thus an attempt is made to bring transmigration in accordance with the rhythm and cycle of nature; and it might be argued from this that, whatever quarters the notion of the transmigration of soul ultimately derives from, it could be made intelligible in the existing terms of the Year and the eternal return of nature. Just as any other magnitude in the universe, man too is part of the rhythm of time. His time is simply slower, just as in the Epic and Purāṇic accounts of the Life of Brahmā, Brahmā lives infinitely more slowly than even the universe itself. Man is not really an exception to the patterns of the universe, although he can make himself an exception.

The same Chāndogya Upaniṣad text lays down what forever more will remain

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19. Chāndogya Upaniṣad, iv, 15, 5-6; also v, 10, 1.

20. Ibid., v, 10, 3-6.

part of the doctrine and speculation:

those whose conduct in the world has been pleasing, it may be expected that they attain to a pleasing womb, that of a brāhmaṇ, or a kṣatriya or a vaiśya; and those whose conduct has been soiled, it may be expected that they attain to soiled wombs, of a dog, a swine or an outcaste.<sup>21</sup>

This part of the doctrine has had momentous consequences. Life, with all its inequalities, has suddenly become intelligible. A person in this world--which means in transmigration--has created his own fate. No one is to blame for the circumstances of his new life but he himself--no one, not even a God. The bothersome problem in all religions, how a perfect and benevolent creator could have permitted evil in his creation, never had to be addressed by the ancient thinkers. The problem had already been resolved by the doctrine of karma--the effect of former deeds on one's present and future condition. The automatic transmutation of a person's previous acts into his future circumstances takes complete care of the needs of divine retribution. Consequently, Justice, so important a divine attribute in the mediterranean religions, is not so in Indian religion. God need not be just, for the law of karma is.

Also, though this by no means follows from the letter and the spirit of the doctrine, it could encourage an attitude of inevitability toward one's own fate. One has been put in this position and nothing can be helped about it. If one lives according to it, one may perhaps fare better in a future life. It could also encourage an attitude of inevitability towards another's fate. It did not inspire a sense of responsibility towards one's neighbor, beyond pointing out the obvious moral that whatever evil befalls one's neighbor is probably the result of his failure in duty in a previous existence.

## XII. Despair and Hope

But from the very beginning, it seems, a note of despair accompanies the promulgation of the doctrine of transmigration. Already the earliest expression, punarmṛtyu ('redeath'), shows that the kind of immortality which transmigration implies is not viewed at all as an immortality but rather as perpetual mortality. This of course has found its deepest statement in the Buddha's assertion that life is suffering; but already our present text warns, "One should guard against it, if not "one should loathe it." This remains a curious problem in ancient Indian culture. The Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas exude a complete optimism, which in the liturgical

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21. Ibid., v, 10, 7.



texts at times approaches megalomania. Everything can be achieved by the patron under the appropriate guidance of his learned priests. This self-confidence can hardly be separated from the obvious success that the rule of the Indo-Aryans had in Northern India during the first millennium of their presence there. Of course, the texts that so confidently speak to us are the texts of the higher professional classes of priests whose erudition and effectiveness depended on the great of the land. Were the lives of the others intolerably wretched so that when newer texts gave voice to them the voice cried with anguish?

The solution to this curious problem of pessimism will never be satisfactory. It has been argued that with the resettlement of the Indo-Aryan peoples, the old bonds of tribes and clans were destroyed and the consequent feeling of insecurity expressed itself in a spirit of pessimism. It is also possible to speculate on a series of natural disasters, the harshness of the climate, the scarcity of crops, for which proof of the occurrence, let alone of the impact upon a nation-wide mentality, is hard to find.

There may be some virtue in another approach. This so-called pessimism is, after all, the starting point of a supreme optimism: that man is able to find release from his condition to enter a state that is perfect bliss. Although this certainly is not the full solution, one might submit that the insistence of the misery of life after life in the *samsāra* (the 'run-around' of transmigration) may be inspired by a desire to emphasize the transcending importance of release from it. For it can be noted that with the despair for the sufferings of life, the hope for release was always cultivated.

Here once more the ideas fall in with notions that had already been elaborated by earlier texts. We have seen that from the later *Brāhmaṇas* onward there was an unrelenting quest for a final principle that underlies the transitoriness of things, both in the universe at large and the microcosm that is man. This quest, it would seem, went on independently from a quest for release from the conditions of transmigration. It continues the search for a unifying principle in the higher and the lower worlds, which can be followed from the *Ṛg Veda*.

In this search the thinkers developed different ideas of how the multiple had developed out of the one. This development was not in all quarters looked upon as a deterioration of an originally pure and perfect principle, but could be stated as the self-fulfilment, the self-completion of a creator. But important thinkers increasingly emphasized the difference between the ultimate being and the world. This led one of them, *Yājñavalkya*, to describe the ultimate being as *neti neti* ('it is not this or that'), completely different from our universe of discourse, and beyond speech, if not of thought.

Yet this development, even if viewed as a deterioration, still provides a link



between the world and the ultimate. It remains possible, as it were, to reverse the process of creation. In the sixth chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Uddālaka projects a creation from sat, the 'Existent,' from whom respectively emanate Fire, Water and Food, as general rubrics of creation, which the Existent then pervades and ensouls. Out of them all this originates. Still it is possible to follow the trail back:

thus, my son, through Food as the shoot seek out Water as its root; through Water as the shoot, seek out Fire as its root; through Fire as the shoot, seek out the Existent as the root. In the Existent are rooted all these creatures, my son, in it they have their place, in it they have their foundation.<sup>22</sup>

In this same account it is noteworthy that there is a certain inevitability about the soul's contact with the Supreme. Uddālaka continues to instruct his son. "My son," he says, "learn from me the facts of sleep," and embarks upon a speculation which once more brings out the tacit acceptance that the name equals the thing:

When a person literally 'sleeps,' he is united with the Existent. He is 'gone into the self' (svamapīto), therefore they say of him that he 'sleeps,' (svapiti). For indeed he is 'gone into the self' (svamapīto). Just as a bird that is tied to a string flies every which way without finding a perch anywhere and falls back on where he is tied to, so the mind, my son, flying every which way without finding a perch anywhere, comes back to the Breath. For, my son, the mind is tied to the Breath.<sup>23</sup>

Uddālaka's Supreme is eminently concrete; it is the Existent that is here and now, and pervades the entire universe. It is enough that one knows that one can reach it and (by following the trail of creation back) how one can reach it. No particular reward is set for it.

Elsewhere, however, this Supreme, with whom every conscious and unconscious creature can be identified, is associated with bliss. The term ānanda, which becomes a signature for the bliss of release, is not frequent in the Upaniṣads; it does not occur in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, and in other texts of the same age it may have the meaning of sexual bliss. But the concept is not new. Older texts speak of 'all desires fulfilled' as the apex of a hierarchy of works. Just as the sensual cognitions are the scattered deteriorations of the unbounded consciousness, as the rites are the scattered deteriorations of the archetypal Sacrifice, as the formulas

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22. Chāndogya Upaniṣad, vi, 8, 4.

23. Ibid., vi, 8, 1-2.

are of the Supreme Syllable Ōm, so the multitudinous objects of desire which one may obtain through one's work are the scattered deteriorations of the total fulfilment of 'all desires'. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad delineates this heatedly:

It amounts to this--a person is either such or so. As he has acted, as he has lived, so he becomes. A man of good acts becomes good, a man of bad acts becomes bad; through virtuous acts he becomes virtuous, through evil acts evil. So they indeed say that a person is what he wishes: as he wishes so he wills, and as he wills, so he does act; and as he acts so he collects. There is a verse on this: 'A man of attachments goes, with his act (karma), to the mark upon which he had fixed his mind. Having reached the end of his karma, whatever it was he acted, he once more returns from yonder world to this world, in order to act.' -- Thus the man of desires. Now the man of no desires, whose desire is the self, his Breath does come out (to return): being Brahman he merges into Brahman.<sup>24</sup>

Having no particular object to desire, one has obtained bliss itself, the Ātman, the Brahman into which one merges. Celaka Śāṇḍilyāyana in the Mystery of the Fire in the Śtatpatha Brāhmaṇa was one to prepare this notion. Speculating on the ritual of piling the fire altar, he identifies the first three layers in familiar terms as earth, atmosphere and heaven. Then the sacrificer building this universe builds a further layer, the layer which is 'all desires fulfilled'. But Celaka still worked with an ideology for which acts sufficed. In the Maitrāyaṇi Upaniṣad this fifth term is Brahman in which the sacrificer becomes blissful, while the Taittirīya Upaniṣad finds in this old symbolism a principle to mark off levels in the human personality: the person as food, as breath, as mind, as consciousness, as bliss. There is little talk yet of transmigration. This supreme state of being has, it seems, already been defined as bliss before it came to be contrasted with the sorrow of the perpetual mortality of transmigration. The 'act' had already been transcended before it had been formulated that a life of acts necessarily leads to another life of acts, ad infinitum. For surely he who, in Celaka's terms, had 'all desires fulfilled' has no more reason for acting, and is, in Yājñavalkya's terms 'desireless, rid of desires, having obtained his desire, ' and is Brahman.

But this has momentous consequences. One can aspire to Bliss, become Brahman, by, as Yājñavalkya also pointed out, becoming a mendicant. Thus one transcends good and evil. But what about good and evil?

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24. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, iv, 4, 5-6.

### XIII. Two Ethics

Here, though at first still muted, has begun the dialogue--if not the quarrel--that has echoed through all ages of the Indian civilization. Until today a holy man, self-exiled from family, caste and society, approaching a village may hear the brāhman cry out to him: "Why don't you do the duties laid down for all of us? Why have you deserted?" And has the question become entirely rhetoric?

The developments which we have traced summarily have left Indian civilization with the choice between two ethics, the ethic of Task and the ethic of Release. The believer in the mediterranean religions has no choice but to live well or not, to die, and be judged to an immortality of bliss or grief. The Indian has a choice--to accept his tasks, according to the tenets laid down in the books on Dharma, aware that this commitment will, or may lead to the perpetual mortality of transmigration--or to commit himself to release, aware that this will, or may lead to a complete severance of all the normal human bonds.

Task was profoundly inculcated in the Indian mind. After all, the immense literature of the Veda up to the Upaniṣads concerned itself with little else. The task was the rite that was congenital to the person. It had insured his conception, his sex, his safe birth, his second birth, his marriage, retirement, death, assumption into the World of the Fathers and his continuous sustenance there. With it came an ordered society where each had his role to complement the roles of others. Thus it had been from the beginning when the Primeval Person was sacrificed and society was built from his limbs, when "the gods sacrificed the sacrifice with the sacrifice; and those were the ancient manifestations of order."

An entire way of life, an entire erudition and culture had been built upon the simple assumption that man is a social being and therefore, naturally, has a commitment to fulfill. The ethic of Task carried its own optimism with it: this is essentially a good world, made good by the tasks that all mankind dutifully fulfills. Later on, when in Epic and Purāṇic texts the notion of four ages is elaborated, it is invariably pointed out that the world has deteriorated to its present state of immortality, not because there are so few saints around, but because all classes have been delinquent in their duties.

At the precise point where a view of the world as the stage of acts, magnificent and humble, public and private, seemed to be so firmly established as to last for a millennium, a new philosopheme was permitted to interfere that frustrated the very ideas upon which this millennium was to build. We have noted the precursors of the new philosophers in passing, the longhairs who were girt by the wind or went in dirty yellow robes, noticed briefly by the Ṛg Veda and apparently forgotten by the interminably disputatious priests of the sacrifices. Ironically, in their own discussion these priests appear to have prepared the precise patterns of thought that would turn

against their presuppositions.

At the basis of any ritualist act is the certainty that this particular act will have that particular result. There is an automatism between act and result that is final. There can be no doubt that one who sacrifices with the soma attains heaven, or that he who sacrifices with the Kārīrī gets rain. Doubtless these are the more spectacular acts; in his daily life man continues to act in a more humble but not less efficacious way. But no longer do these acts lead to a final heaven, or even to the World of the Fathers. They lead back to a new birth in a world that is increasingly viewed as a poorer one.

Nevertheless, as Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad Gītā, sensibly remarks, one cannot live without acting. A world in which everyone would opt for release is simply unimaginable. But such is the power of the new philosopheme that the world of task is forever clouded. The tidy world of the village is haunted by the specters of the forest, not only the demons that inhabit its wilderness, but also the sages that dart forth through it, from village to village, never belonging, bent upon their sole pursuits.

Compromises are forthcoming, no doubt. Buddhism will produce its Bodhissattvas, Hinduism its Bhagavad Gītā where the solution is desireless action. Devotionalism (bhakti) will offer another answer, where the satisfaction of task and the release of insight is transcended by the beatitude in God. Still, to the Indian the choice remains, and with the choice the dilemma.

#### XIV. Conclusion

As will have become clear, it is impossible to write a history of Indian civilization on the basis of the Vedic materials. On the one hand, they are not representative enough; on the other hand, with their emphasis on ritual and on notions at least in part evolved from ritual thinking, they may appear overrepresentative of that part of Indian religion, faith and cults with which they are concerned.

Nevertheless, however lacunal our knowledge remains, the Vedas, in the widest sense of the word, present us with the earliest statements of concepts and practices that will inform the civilization for a long time to come. The view of society as constituted by four 'classes' or ranks that collaborate in complementary functions was adopted by the Dharma Śāstras and provided a rationale for the caste system. The erudition of the Vedas themselves brought about a peculiar educational system, based upon memorization and a minimal use of written texts, and resorting to an extraordinarily intimate relationship between pupil and teacher, thus helping to form the unique authority of the guru. At the same time this erudition produced auxiliary sciences, among which Grammar was the most important one; it presented



the civilization with a unique unitary instrument in the Sanskrit language. Another science, that of Astronomy, offered a niche for a developing astrology and science of portents.

But perhaps the Vedas' most important contribution was, on the one hand, their inculcation of the necessity of Dharma, and on the other hand, their accommodation of the doctrine of transmigration in their later phases, from which the philosophies of Vedanta would enlarge. The Veda, validating both Dharma and Release, will forever remain the perennial authority of the orthodox.

Much is still absent, either because it was not known to the authorities on whom we must rely, or because they deliberately ignored it. Theism, later to grow so important, is hardly visible in the Vedas. Yet, by preparing and elaborating the conception of the Supreme, the Upaniṣads can with some exaggeration be said to have provided a niche for a supreme Personal God before there was one. The believer's emotional relation to his God through bhakti is in fact unknown until a late Upaniṣad.

Very few distinct personalities emerge. No biography can be written about the two most prominent of the Upaniṣadic teachers, Yājñavalkya and Uddālaka. Nothing prepares us for a personality like Gautama the Buddha, nor for the heroes of the Mahābhārata. When other milieus begin to speak, it is as though a new world is opening.

Least of all do we find the extraordinarily varied myths, sagas and legends of gods, saints and kings that the later literature offers. Still we know that many of them must have been recounted to and perhaps by the same persons about whose other discussion we are informed. Yet, while such matters may have been intentionally excluded from the Vedic tradition (whose purposes after all were different), there is no trace of doctrinal intransigence and dogmatism. Apparent from every page of the Upaniṣads is the urge to seek out and to learn the basic principles on which reality turns. No closed systems are being offered, thought is in continuous flux and flexible, and the disputants are ready to give up their views if better ones are presented. In their disputes and speculations a new structure of the world emerges: elements, senses, their functions and interrelations are being defined. There are the beginnings of an atomic view of evolution, of a psychology and cosmology. If at some times the imagination is bogged down in esoteric ritual detail, at other times it soars forth with an inspiration that will give a momentum to a philosophical élan for more than a millennium. With all their lacunae the Vedas down to the Upaniṣads give a clear picture of the fundamental social, philosophical and religious concerns of the Indian.



## CHAPTER II

### ŚRAMAṆAS: THEIR CONFLICT WITH BRĀHMAṆICAL SOCIETY

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## ŚRAMAṆAS: THEIR CONFLICT WITH BRĀHMANICAL SOCIETY

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## ŚRAMAṆAS: THEIR CONFLICT WITH BRĀHMAṆICAL SOCIETY

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### Background to the Conflict

The unquestioned authority of the Vedas;  
the belief in a world-creator;  
the quest for purification through ritual bathings;  
the arrogant division into castes;  
the practice of mortification to atone for sin;  
-- these five are the marks  
of the crass stupidity of witless men.<sup>1</sup>

This bold diagnosis of the malady of Indian society was not pronounced by a modern rationalist but by Dharmakīrti, an eminent seventh century Buddhist logician of Nālandā. Notwithstanding the strictures of Dharmakīrti, his five 'marks' neatly sum up the basic beliefs that characterize Hindu civilization both as it was at the time of the Buddha and as it is today, after a lapse of more than 2500 years. The first four 'marks', viz., the authority of the Vedas, the belief in a Creator, the path of ritualism, and a social structure based on a system of hereditary ranks, constitute the four cornerstones of the brāhmaṇical schools, whereas the last, viz., the path of asceticism, forms the chief characteristic of all heterodox schools collectively called the śramaṇas. Despite their common origin, these two dominant traditions, the orthodox and the heterodox, gave rise to innumerable crosscurrents, sometimes completely losing their identity, and at other times merging in a confluence, only to re-emerge again in a new form and flow in opposite directions. The history of Indian civilization is truly the history of the mutual influence of these two traditions that resulted in the transformation of the Vedic religion of the Indo-Āryans into modern Hinduism.

It is not easy to trace the entire course of this transformation with any great certainty. But it is possible to observe the moments of their mutual impacts and consequent adjustments to each other's position as reflected in the vast Indian literature beginning from the Vedas and continuing up to the writings of Mahātmā

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1. R. Sankrityayana (ed.), Pramāṇavārtika-svavṛtti-tīka, Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, pp. 617-618.

Gāndhi, the last of the Indian saints, claimed equally by the upholders of both the brāhmaṇical and the śramaṇa ideals of modern India.

Of the only two references to the word śramaṇa (practicer of religious exertions --from śram 'to exert') in the Vedic literature, one is found in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad<sup>2</sup> where it is placed side by side with tāpasa (practicer of religious austerities--from tap 'to warm') indicating that a śramaṇa, like the tāpasa, belonged to a class of mendicants. It is not clear if this word śramaṇa at this stage referred exclusively to a member of the heterodox orders of monks whom we meet frequently in the Pali scriptures of the Theravāda school of Buddhism. In the latter the compound word śramaṇa-brāhmaṇa is of common occurrence and definitely refers to two distinct groups of holy men, the former denoting all kinds of mendicants including the Buddhists, and the latter solely reserved for the brāhmaṇs, the lay upholders of the Vedic tradition. The brāhmaṇ mendicants are here designated by the term tāpasa but never by the word śramaṇa. In contrast, the Buddha is called a Great (mahā) śramaṇa, and the members of his order (saṅgha) are referred to by the non-Buddhists as the śramaṇas, the sons of Śākya. In the Jain texts also, Mahāvīra the Jain teacher, a contemporary of the Buddha, is called a śramaṇa, a title by which later Hindu writers identified the ascetics of the Jain and Buddhist faith.

The Pali scriptures occasionally betray a certain animosity between the śramaṇas, particularly the Buddhists, and the brāhmaṇs. But on the whole their attitude to each other was one of cordiality. In subsequent periods, however, the successes of Buddhists in converting the great Emperor Aśoka, and in winning for their order the support of a large number of rich merchants, traditionally the patrons of the brāhmaṇs, must have produced great hostility between them; so much so, that Patañjali (c. 150 B.C.) in his Mahābhāṣya<sup>3</sup> cites 'śramaṇa-brāhmaṇa', together with 'cat and mouse', 'dog and fox' and 'snake and mongoose' as an illustration of such beings. Centuries later, Hemacandra (12th century A.D.) himself a śramaṇa (a Jain monk), cites the same example in an identical context in his grammar,<sup>4</sup> thus confirming the traditional hostility between the śramaṇas and the brāhmaṇs that permeated medieval Indian society.

The rise of the śramaṇas as a dominant force in Indian life is seen in the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism as the great salvation religions in the sixth century B.C. The people who witnessed their emergence had moved a long way from their ancestors the Indo-Āryans, who had settled at least a thousand years earlier in the northwest after conquering the indigenous people of the Indus valley civilization.

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2. Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, IV, 3, 22.

3. F. Kielhorn, Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali, Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1892, vol. I, p. 476.

4. Siddhahema, III, 1, 141.

The Vedas, the sacred texts of the early Āryans, had already attained the status of 'revealed' texts, and their authors had long become 'the ancient seers'. The anthropomorphism of the Vedas passing through the successive stages of henotheism and pantheism had now entered a new and possibly final stage of its development, the monotheism of the Upaniṣads. The old Vedic god Varuṇa, the mighty upholder of the Moral Law, had long been relegated to the position of a minor deity. Even his flamboyant successor, the warlike Indra, had been replaced by Prajāpati, the creator God, the God preeminent in the Brāhmaṇa literature, the main source of Hindu theism. The primeval self-sacrifice of Prajāpati, as narrated in the epoch-making Puruṣa-sūkta,<sup>5</sup> having for centuries remained a source of interminable speculation on the nature of the sacrifice and its relation to gods and men, had resulted simultaneously in uniting the gods in the concept of an impersonal Brahman and dividing men in a permanent division of four varṇas (ranks), leaving them both in the hands of a sacerdotal class of priests who alone knew the magic of that cosmogonic sacrifice.

It is at this juncture in the history of India, that marks the end of the classical Vedic period and the beginning of the Upaniṣads, that we have the first glimpse of certain new theories, clearly identifiable with those of the later śramaṇas, coming into direct contact with the brāhmaṇical ideals. The heterogeneous nature of the Upaniṣadic speculations, when compared with that of the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas, shows infusions of further elements, both social and philosophical, to an unprecedented degree. The participation of kṣatriyas like Aśvapati Kaikeya, Ajātaśatru of Kāśi, Janaka of Videha, Pravahaṇa Jaivali and Sanatkumāra, not as disciples but as authorities, and sometimes even as teachers of the brāhmaṇs, points to the evolution of new doctrines originating from non-brāhmaṇical sources. The Upaniṣadic doctrines of Brahman and Ātman can be consistently traced back to their original sources, viz., the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas. But the doctrines of transmigration (punarjanma), action (karma), and emancipation (mokṣa), doctrines fundamental to the śramaṇa religions and at a later stage to all Indian religions, do not follow with equal consistency from the Vedic tradition. These were probably introduced into the main tradition by the kṣatriyas, the new teachers of the Upaniṣadic period.

One of the major Upaniṣadic passages dealing with the earliest notion of the transmigration of the soul is attributed to a prince called Pravahaṇa Jaivali. The latter when approached by a learned brāhmaṇ, Gautama Āruṇi, seeking instruction in this knowledge, says:

As truly as this knowledge has never heretofore dwelt with any  
brāhmaṇ whatsoever, so truly may not you and your grandfathers

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5. Rg Veda, X, 90.



injure us. But I will tell it to you, for who is able to refuse you when you speak thus /i.e., 'I come to you, sir, as a pupil!'/<sup>6</sup>

The doctrine of karma is not explicitly attributed to the kṣatriyas. Its exponent in the Upaniṣads is Yājñavalkya, the great brahmavādin. But his manner of expounding this doctrine in the assembly of Janaka betrays its non-brāhmaṇical origin. We quote here the relevant portion:

'Yājñavalkya,' said Ārtabhāga, 'when the voice of a dead man goes into fire, his breath into wind, his eye into the sun, his mind into the moon, his hearing into the quarters of heaven, his body into the earth, his soul (ātman) into space, the hairs of his body into trees, and his blood and semen are placed in water, what then becomes of this person (puruṣa)?'

'Ārtabhāga, my dear, take my hand. We two only will know of this. This is not for us two /to speak of/ in public.'

The two went away and deliberated. What they said was karma (action). What they praised was karma. Verily, one becomes good by good action, bad by bad action.<sup>7</sup>

Yājñavalkya's reluctance to discuss the doctrine of karma in public (a reluctance not shown on any other occasion) can perhaps be explained on the assumption that it was, like that of the transmigration of the soul, of non-brāhmaṇical origin. In view of the fact that this doctrine is emblazoned on almost every page of the śramaṇa scriptures, it is highly probable that it was derived from them.

A major effect of the ascendancy of the kṣatriyas and of the doctrines of saṃsāra (the transmigration cycle) and karma (action) was the decline in importance of sacrifice (yajña) and its replacement by asceticism (tapas) as a means of achieving the new aim of life, salvation (mokṣa) from saṃsāra. The ancient institution of yajña, the center of the Indo-Āryan culture, around which moved the entire social and religious life of the Āryans, and which promised them abundance on earth and the worlds of Fathers and gods after death was now looked upon as a snare binding its performer ever more to the ignoble desires of life and perpetuating the cycle of endless births and deaths here as well as in heaven. Quite contrary to the spirit of the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas, the Upaniṣads read:

What shall we do with offspring, we whose is this Soul, this world?

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6. Robert E. Hume (tr.), The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads, London: Oxford U. Press, rev. ed., 1962, p. 162.

7. Ibid., p. 110.

They, verily, rising above the desire for wealth and the desire for the worlds, lived the life of a mendicant.<sup>8</sup>

By renouncing his abundant wealth and two dear wives, Yājñavalkya, the greatest exponent of the Brahma-vidyā, had, like his illustrious śramaṇa successor the Buddha, renounced the sacrifice, and by implication all hereditary social duties and ritualism enjoined by the Vedas.

Scores of references to ascetics variously called muni, yati and parivrāt and to their asceticism or the practice of tapas are to be found in the Vedic literature. The Brāhmaṇas speak of Prajāpati's tapas prior to the act of Creation. The name Āraṇyaka (forest dweller) itself indicates a shift from sacrifice to renunciation leading towards asceticism. One of the principal Upaniṣads, the Muṇḍaka, while recommending the sacrifices enjoined by the Vedas, clearly warns that they are 'unsafe boats' leading to repeated births and deaths, and declares that 'by austerity (tapas) Brahma becomes built up.'<sup>9</sup> The brāhmaṇical theory of the four āśramas (stages of life) accords supreme place to asceticism in the life of a dvija (twice-born). The Vaikhāṇasa-sūtras, a post-Upaniṣadic law-book for the ascetics of the brāhmaṇical tradition, lists various kinds of ascetics and their manifold practices. It would thus appear that asceticism had become an acceptable way of life for the brāhmaṇs even before the rise of the śramaṇas in the sixth century B.C. It must however be remembered that it was never accepted by the brāhmaṇs as a norm but as a concession to certain elements of the Āryan community who did not recognize the Vedic tradition. The Atharva Veda contains a story of Indra's killing the yatis (ascetics). Commenting on the word yati, Sāyaṇa says these are to be identified with mendicants 'devoid of the thoughts of the Vedānta', or 'a people belonging to the asuras'.<sup>10</sup> In the Aitareya and the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇas the same story is repeated. Here Sāyaṇa explains the term yati as 'people opposed to the sacrifices (yajñavirodhijanān), and 'endowed with rules contrary to the Vedas (vedaviruddhdhaniyamopetān)'.<sup>11</sup> The Dharma Śāstras, the epics and even the Purāṇas, as will be seen below, reflect the tensions produced in the Indian society by the impact of these yatis, whose tradition was carried on by the śramaṇas in the post-Upaniṣadic period.

The antiquity of the concept of asceticism in India goes back to the prehistoric Indus valley civilization. Several seals from Harappā depict a horned god seated

8. Ibid., p. 143.

9. Ibid., p. 367.

10. Atharva Veda, II, 5, 3. (See W. D. Whitney and C. R. Lanman, Atharva Veda Samhita, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1905. Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 7, p. 44.)

11. Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa, VIII, 1, 4; XIII, 4, 17. (See H. D. Sharma, "History of Brahmanical Asceticism," Poona Orientalist, 3-4, 1938-40.)

in the cross-legged posture of the later Indian yogins, surrounded by animals, and is identified by Marshall with Paśupati, Śiva of later Hinduism.<sup>12</sup> There are also found a few figures in terracotta of nude men with coiled hair; their posture, rigidly upright, resembles that of the latter day Jain images in kāyotsarga meditation.<sup>13</sup> The Rg Veda contains a solitary hymn that describes a muni (a silent one). In the words of Keith,

He differs entirely from the Brahman student or the man undergoing consecration, for his ecstasy is not connected either with the sacrifice or with any of the rites ancillary to it or the entry of the youth into the full life of the community.<sup>14</sup>

He is described as girdled with the wind, his hair is long, and his soiled garments are of yellow hue. Men see only his mortal body but he

looking upon all varied forms flies through the region of the air, treading the path of sylvan beasts, Gandharvas and Apsarasas.<sup>15</sup>

He knows secret desires, is a most delightful friend, he is the heaven and the light, and he drinks with Rudra a draught from the same cup. This hymn strongly suggests a close connection between these munis and Rudra/Śiva, the only ascetic god of the later Hindu pantheon.

Another enigmatic figure connected with asceticism is that of the vrātya. The Atharva Veda<sup>16</sup> refers to his standing motionless for a whole year and similar ascetic practices, and even elevates him to a cosmic power. He wanders in different directions accompanied by a harlot and a Māgadha (a bard from Magadha the cradle of śramaṇa culture) and arrives in the courts of kings as a guest. He is called a vidvān (a learned one), and his hosts are expressly asked not to revile him. If the host is preparing a fire-offering while a vrātya arrives as an atithi (a guest), the former should ask his permission to make an oblation. If the vrātya should not permit it, the host may not offer the oblation. References are also made to non-vrātyas, calling themselves vrātyas, bearing the name only. According to tradition the vrātyas are Āryans living outside that community and hence fallen from pure Āryanhood. There are special rites called vrātyastomas which were intended for their readmission into

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12. A. L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India, New York: Grove Press, 1959, p. 23.

13. Ibid.

14. A. Berriedale Keith, Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1925. Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 32, p. 402.

15. Ibid.

16. Atharva Veda, XV.

the brāhmaṇical community. These vrātyas, the dissident or the renegade Āryans, with their non-Vedic practices, and close connection with kṣatriyas and the people of Magadha, together with the yatis mentioned above, appear to be the forerunners of the later śramaṇa saints who also called themselves Āryans but persistently refused to conform to the Vedic scriptures and the brāhmaṇical institutions of rank (varṇa) and āśrama.

The purpose of asceticism and the austerities connected with it may have been the acquisition of magic powers similar to those that were promised by the Vedic sacrifices; but by the time of the Upaniṣads these were definitely geared towards the realization of mokṣa, i.e., the emancipation of the individual from the cycle of transmigration (saṃsāra). As the latter was the result of actions, (karma) whether undertaken out of ignorance and thus yielding evil births, or according to the Vedic injunctions assuring heavenly states, all actions were to be renounced by a true aspirant. Since this is impossible, a search for actions or the modes of their accomplishments that did not bind one to the saṃsāra, became operative. The birth of the Indian darśanas (systems of philosophy) can be traced to this single problem, the chief preoccupation of all Indian thinkers whether of the orthodox or of the heterodox persuasion.

One of the earliest attempts to resolve this problem, as is seen in the earliest Upaniṣads, was to interpret the major animal-sacrifices as of cosmic significance. The sacrificial horse in the Aśvamedha, for instance, was not merely an animal, but represented the whole universe, the various parts of its body being identified with the diverse members of the cosmic person.<sup>17</sup> During subsequent periods, this led brāhmaṇical law-givers as well as exponents of the Mīmāṃsā school to exempt sacrificial violence from the purview of hiṃsā, the first of the forbidden acts for all claiming the status of an Āryan. But sacrifice was not the only act that was enjoined by the Vedas. There were other duties, flowing from the authority of the Vedic scriptures, such as the duties of varṇa (rank) and āśrama (stages of life), the duties devolving upon a person in paying the debts to the gods, the fathers and the teachers, which would involve manifold acts and thus perpetuate the saṃsāra. The Upaniṣadic seers resolved this problem by advocating the overriding nature of the knowledge of the Ātman (the Cosmic Self) over all deeds. Endowed with this knowledge, a person might engage in any and all deeds and yet may not be bound by their results. Indra, the warrior god of the Vedas, who becomes the embodiment of the Ātman in the Upaniṣads, while addressing Prataardana who arrived at his abode (the heavens) by fighting, says:

Understand me, myself. This indeed I deem most beneficent to man  
--namely, that one should understand me. I slew the three-headed

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17. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, I, 1, 1.



son of Tvaṣṭri. I delivered the Arunmukhas, ascetics, to the wild dogs. Transgressing many compacts, I transfixed the people of Prahlāda in the sky, the Paulomas in the atmosphere, the Kālāñjakas on earth. Of me, such a one as I was then, not a single hair was injured. So he who understands me--by no deed whatsoever of his is his world injured, not by stealing, not by killing an embryo, not by the murder of his mother, not by the murder of his father; if he does any evil (pāpa), the dark colour departs not from his face (i.e., he does not become pale).<sup>18</sup>

Although Indra's claims to the acts performed can be substantiated from the Vedic scriptures, it must not be doubted even for a moment that the Upaniṣads admit the possibility of any one with the knowledge of the Ātman indulging in the cardinal sins. The purport of the statement, in the light of the spirit of the Upaniṣads, is that such a person endowed with the knowledge has already attained the unity with the Brahman, has ceased to be an individual. His actions are real only in an empirical sense; but from a transcendental point of view they are either illusions or (even if real) do not belong to him.

The illusionists, for whom all multiplicity, the operative field of all actions (karma), was a mere name, found their support in the innumerable passages that described the sole reality of the Brahman, the One, Eternal and irreducible principle of the Upaniṣads. But the scriptures also spoke of the Brahman 'creating the universe and then entering into it as soul', thus confirming the immanent nature of this transcendent spirit. The distinction drawn here between the Creator and the creation, i.e., 'between the Supreme and the individual soul' led to the theism of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, the main source of Indian theism. Discussing the genesis of saṃsāra and the role of human beings played in their own emancipation, the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad emphatically declares that neither time, nor inherent nature (svabhāva), nor necessity (niyati), nor chance (yadṛcchā), nor the elements (bhūta), nor heredity, nor a combination of all these are to be considered as the cause of saṃsāra (transmigration), and that 'the soul certainly is impotent over the cause of pleasure and pain', for 'He is the One who rules over all these causes, from 'time' to the 'soul'.<sup>19</sup> The problem of karma was thus sought to be resolved by the Upaniṣads by either a denial of its reality or by the imposition of a supreme will that deprived the human being of any responsibility in its operation.

Even the 'Realist' Sāṅkhya, who shows a remarkable affinity with the śramaṇas in his unqualified rejection of both the Brahman (of the Idealists) and the Īśvara (of the Theists), failed to offer a new solution to the problem of karma. The Sāṅkhya,

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18. Robert E. Hume, op. cit., pp. 320-321.

19. Ibid., p. 394.



quite contrary to the spirit of the Upaniṣads, accepted the reality of the multiple universe (prakṛti) and of the multiplicity of the individual souls (puruṣas). Nevertheless, he retained the basic doctrine of the Upaniṣads by transferring all actions (karma) to the material prakṛti, thus preserving the eternal and incorruptible nature of the puruṣa. Indeed it may be said that in subsequent periods the adherence to this one single doctrine, viz., the eternal and unchanging nature of the soul, to the exclusion of many other cherished notions of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads already rejected by the Sāṅkhya, became the hallmark of all brāhmaṇical schools. The śramaṇas, while assimilating several brāhmaṇical theories regarding matter and spirit, and a large number of practices current in the schools of Yoga, remained uncompromisingly opposed to this cardinal doctrine of the Vedic Āryans. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the time of their first emergence in a period immediately following the rise of Sāṅkhya doctrines, the śramaṇas appear as leaders of heterodox religions proclaiming novel theories of karma and mokṣa and above all, of the soul (ātman).

One of the outstanding distinctions between the brāhmaṇical and the śramaṇa doctrines is that whereas the former can be traced only to a body of literature of varying antiquity, the latter can be attributed to definite historical persons who flourished around the sixth century B.C. in the ancient kingdoms of Videha and Magadha. Our main sources for the history of the śramaṇas are not the epics like the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, nor the Hindu Purāṇas, the traditional sources of Indian history, but the scriptural literature of the Jains and the Buddhists, written not in Sanskrit, the language of the brāhmaṇs, but in the vernacular popular languages of Magadha, called respectively Ardhamāgadhī and Pali. Although the date of their final redaction is fairly late, the 1st century B.C. (in Ceylon) in the case of the Buddhists, and the 5th century A.D. (at Valabhi in India) in the case of the Jains, certain historical data provided by them are corroborated by the edicts of Aśoka (269 B.C. - 232 B.C.) and a large number of inscriptions of the subsequent period. These are supplemented by the traditions preserved in a large number of commentaries (Aṭṭhakathās and Tīkās) and chronicles like the Mahāvamsa (5th century A.D.) and the eye-witness accounts of Chinese travellers like Fa-hsien (399 - 414 A.D.), Hsüan Tsang (629 - 645 A.D.) and I-Tsing (671 - 695 A.D.).

### Śramaṇas of Pre-Buddhist India

Traditions vary on the exact date of the Buddha's death, but it is now generally accepted that he died at the age of eighty in or around 483 B.C. A famous Buddhist text called the Sāmaññaphala-sutta ('Fruits of the life of a śramaṇa'),<sup>20</sup> alluding to

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20. Thomas W. Rhys Davids (tr.), Dialogues of the Buddha, London: Luzac, 1956, vol. I, pp. 65-95.

an incident that took place towards the end of the Buddha's life, gives a fairly long account of six 'heretical' śramaṇa leaders, contemporaries of the Buddha himself. The dialogue takes place between the Buddha and Ajātasattu, a patricide king of Magadha, who had usurped the throne only some seven years before the Buddha's death. Ajātasattu, after pointing out the advantages derived by the ordinary householders from pursuing their manifold activities, asked the Buddha whether the members of his Order derived any corresponding advantages, visible in this life, by following the life of a recluse (śramaṇa). The Buddha asked him if the king had ever approached other śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas with that question and wanted to know their answers. The king's account may be briefly reproduced here as it is our earliest and main source for the history of the śramaṇas of the pre-Buddhist India.

(1) Antinomian ethics of Pūraṇa Kassapa:

To him who acts or causes another to act, mutilates, ...punishes, ...causes grief or torment, ...to him who kills a living creature, who takes away what is not given, who breaks into houses, who commits dacoity, or robbery, ...or adultery, or who speaks lies, to him thus acting there is no guilt. If with a discus with an edge sharp as a razor he should make all the living creatures on the earth one heap, one mass, of flesh, there would be no guilt thence arising, no increase of guilt would ensue. Were he to go along the south bank of the Ganges striking and slaying, ... no increase of guilt would ensue. Were he to go along the north bank of the Ganges giving alms, offering sacrifices..., there would be no merit thence resulting, no increase of merit. In generosity, in self-mastery, in control of the senses, in speaking truth there is neither merit, nor increase of merit.

(2) Fatalism or Determinism of Makkhali Gosāla:

There is no cause, either ultimate or remote, for the depravity of beings..., or for the rectitude of beings. The attainment of any given condition, of any character, does not depend either on one's own acts, or on the acts of another, or on human effort. There is no such thing as power or energy, or human strength or human vigour. All beings are without force and power and energy of their own. They are bent this way and that by their fate (niyati), by the necessary conditions of the class to which they belong, by their individual nature: and it is according to their position in one or the other of the six classes (abhijāti) that they experience ease or pain.... There are eighty-four hundred thousand periods during which both fools and wise alike, wandering in transmigration, shall at last make an end of pain. Though the wise should hope: 'By this virtue or this

quite contrary to the spirit of the Upaniṣads, accepted the reality of the multiple universe (prakṛti) and of the multiplicity of the individual souls (puruṣas). Nevertheless, he retained the basic doctrine of the Upaniṣads by transferring all actions (karma) to the material prakṛti, thus preserving the eternal and incorruptible nature of the puruṣa. Indeed it may be said that in subsequent periods the adherence to this one single doctrine, viz., the eternal and unchanging nature of the soul, to the exclusion of many other cherished notions of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads already rejected by the Sāṅkhya, became the hallmark of all brāhmaṇical schools. The śramaṇas, while assimilating several brāhmaṇical theories regarding matter and spirit, and a large number of practices current in the schools of Yoga, remained uncompromisingly opposed to this cardinal doctrine of the Vedic Āryans. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the time of their first emergence in a period immediately following the rise of Sāṅkhya doctrines, the śramaṇas appear as leaders of heterodox religions proclaiming novel theories of karma and mokṣa and above all, of the soul (ātman).

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20. Thomas W. Rhys Davids (tr.), Dialogues of the Buddha, London: Luzac, 1956, vol. I, pp. 65-95.

performance of duty, or this penance, or this righteousness will I make the karma [I have inherited], that is not yet mature, mature' -- though the fool should hope, by the same means, to get gradually rid of karma that has matured -- neither of them can do it. The ease and pain, measured out as it were, with a measure, cannot be altered in the course of transmigration; there can be neither increase nor decrease thereof, neither excess nor deficiency. Just as when a ball of string is cast forth it will spread out just so far, and no further, than it can unwind, just so both fools and wise alike, wandering in transmigration exactly for the allotted term, shall then, and only then, make an end of pain.

(3) Materialism of Ajita Kesakambali:

There is no such thing as alms or sacrifice or offering. There is neither fruit nor result of good and evil deeds. There is no such thing as this world or the next. There is no [benefit accruing from the service of] father or mother, nor beings springing into life without them [as in heaven and hell]. There are in the world no recluses or brāhmaṇs who have reached the highest point, who walk perfectly, and who having understood and realised, by themselves alone, both this world and the next, make their wisdom known to others. A human being is built up of the four elements. When he dies the earthy in him returns and relapses to the earth, the fluid to the water, the heart to the fire, the windy to the air, and his faculties (the five senses and the mind) pass into space. The four bearers, on the bier as a fifth, take his dead body away; till they reach the burning ground men utter forth eulogies, but there his bones are bleached, and his offerings end in ashes. It is a doctrine of fools, this talk of gifts... Fools and wise alike, on the dissolution of the body, are cut off, annihilated, and after death they are not.

(4) Atomism of Pakudha Kaccāyana:

The following seven things are neither made nor commanded to be made, neither created nor caused to be created, they are barren (so that nothing is produced out of them), steadfast as a mountain peak, as a pillar firmly fixed. They move not, neither do they vary, they trench not one upon another, nor avail as to ease or pain or both. And what are seven? The four elements--earth, water, fire and air --ease, and pain, and the soul as a seventh. So there is neither slayer nor causer of slaying, hearer or speaker, knower or explainer. When one with a sharp sword cleaves a head in twain, no one thereby deprives any one of life, a sword has only penetrated into the interval between seven elementary substances.



(5) Fourfold Restraint of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta:

A Nigaṇṭha (a man free from bonds) is restrained with a fourfold self-restraint (cātu-yāma-saṃvara-saṃvuto). He lives restrained as regards all evil; all evil he has washed away; and he lives suffused with the sense of evil held at bay. Such is his fourfold self-restraint.

(6) Agnosticism of Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta:

If you ask me whether there is another world--well, if I thought there were, I would say so. But I don't think it is thus or thus. And I don't think it is otherwise. And I don't deny it. And I don't say there neither is, nor is not, another world. [The same formula is repeated after various questions arising from Ajita's doctrine of Materialism] ... to each or any of these questions do I give the same reply.

With the exception of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta who alone speaks of 'restraint', the remaining five śramaṇas are adherents of doctrines which, in varying degrees, deny the moral basis of karma and consequently of salvation, the chief aim of asceticism. This apparent discrepancy can partly be explained by the fact that the Buddhist account is a biased one and does not give us a true picture of their rival schools. Yet the same text describes each one of them in a stereotyped manner as being:

the head of an Order (saṃghī), of a following (gaṇī), the teacher of a school (gaṇācariyo), well known (ñāto) and of repute (yasassī) as a ford-maker (titthakaro), revered by the people, a man of experience, who has long been a recluse (cira-pabbajito) old (addhagato) and well stricken in years (vayo anuppatto).

This is an indication of the fact that the six śramaṇa teachers are historical persons who had well established their position as ascetic leaders long before the advent of Buddhism. Of these, Ajita, the protagonist of materialism, might have been the forerunner of the later Cārvākas. Sañjaya, the agnostic, seems to be identical with an ascetic of that name, the original teacher of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, the two chief disciples of the Buddha. Pakudha Kaccāyana and Pūraṇa Kassapa still remain unidentified, but are often found associated with Makkhali Gosāla, the Ājīvika leader.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta is now accepted as being identical with

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21. A. L. Basham, History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas, London: Luzac, 1951, ch. 5.



Mahāvīra, the last Tīrthaṅkara of the Jains.

Considerable interest attaches to the Jain term Tīrthaṅkara, for it is still used by the Jains to designate their teacher Mahāvīra (the Great Hero), as it was used by the Buddhists in the days of the Buddha to describe all 'heretic' śramaṇas. According to the Jains, a Tīrthaṅkara (literally one who makes a ford, as it were, to cross the flood of saṃsāra) is a person who having completely eradicated all passions (vītarāga) and all possessions (nirgrantha), and consequently having attained omniscience (sarvajña) preaches the norm until he enters Nirvāṇa or emancipation from the cycle of transmigration. Such was, according to the Jains, Mahāvīra, whose claim to omniscience is also attested by the Buddhist texts. A similar claim was made, according to the Jain texts, by Makkhali Gosāla, leader of the Ājīvikas. Unfortunately, no literature of the Ājīvikas has survived, and the school itself became extinct around the 12th century A.D., leaving only a few traces of its existence in the form of short inscriptions and stray references in the literature of its rivals. By contrast, the followers of Mahāvīra called the Jains (after Jina, a Victor) have not only preserved a large body of religious and secular literature but even managed, where others failed, to survive in India, albeit a very small minority, as the sole representatives of the ancient śramaṇa tradition.

### The Ājīvikas

The Jain tradition depicts Makkhali Gosāla as a person of low parentage (mendicant parents) born in a cow-shed (hence Go-Śāla). He maintained himself by the profession of a mankha, displayer of picture-boards. Early in life he approached Mahāvīra, in the third year of the latter's asceticism, at Nalandā. Mahāvīra refused to accept him as his disciple, but the two shared the accommodation for a period of some six years. During this period, Gosāla, in imitation of Mahāvīra, became a naked mendicant and developed magic powers of great potency. He was strongly influenced by Mahāvīra's gift of prophesying and was thus confirmed in his doctrine of predetermination. The two disagreed about this doctrine, and Gosāla, humiliated by the spectacular successes of his rival, separated from Mahāvīra, and declared himself to be a Jina (a Victor), a Tīrthaṅkara, and a Kevalin (possessor of omniscience). He seems to have spent some sixteen years after this event wandering in the region of the Ganges valley, proclaiming himself to be the leader of the already existing community of the Ājīvika mendicants and laymen. Towards the end of this period he settled down in Sāvattthī, a stronghold of the followers of Mahāvīra, in the workshop of a potter-woman called Hālāhalā. Here he was visited by six disācaras ('wandering evangelists') of the Ājīvika community, and Gosāla in consultation with them codified the Ājīvika scriptures and declared the six inevitable and predestined factors of life, viz., gain and loss, joy and sorrow, life and death. The visit of the disācaras and the codification of the new scriptures seems to have aroused the Jain opposition. Mahāvīra is said to have then exposed the true nature of this 'pseudo-jina'. This led to great disputes

between the two leaders, Gosāla trying his deadly magic powers against Mahāvīra. The latter escaped unhurt, and Gosāla died shortly afterwards in the potter-woman's house repenting his evil deeds and declaring that 'he was not a jina but a cheat, and that Mahāvīra was the only true jina.'<sup>22</sup>

There is no means of verifying this evidently biased Jain account of Gosāla. Even the Buddhists considered the Ājīvikas as their chief rivals, given to extreme forms of self-mortification, and they ridiculed their cult of nudity and unclean habits. The purpose of such a penance to an absolute fatalist like Gosāla will always remain a riddle. It is impossible to solve it until we know his doctrine of karma.

In the teachings of Mahāvīra, the doctrine of karma is closely linked together, as in no other Indian system, with penance (tapas), and this must have had some bearing on his rejection of Jinahood to Gosāla. In outward behavior, such as the observance of nudity and of begging and dietary practices, the Ājīvikas and the followers of Mahāvīra show no great difference; indeed at a later time the Ājīvika mendicants appear to have been absorbed into the Jain order of monks in the South. The Ājīvika doctrine of abhijāti (six classes of mankind) shows close resemblance to the Jain doctrine of leśyā (psychic color of all beings). The latter is also closely linked with the doctrine of karma, and the same may have been true of the theory of abhijāti. Finally, fatalism in a modified form is also to be found in the Jain division of living beings into two basic categories, viz., bhavya and abhavya, the former destined to attain liberation and the latter eternally subjected to the cycle of saṃsāra. The main difference between Gosāla and Mahāvīra would appear to be not so much in their adherence to the doctrine of Fatalism and Free-will, but in their advocacy of an absolutist (ekānta) or non-absolutist (anekānta) position regarding the self, karma and salvation.

### The Jains

Mahāvīra, as noted above, is identical with Nātaputta (Son of the Nātr clan) the Nigaṇṭha (free from bonds) of the Pali canon. The Nigaṇṭhas, the present day Jains, fix the date of his death as 527 B.C., and consider him to be the last of the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras of the present age, his immediate predecessor being Pārśva, who is believed to have attained Nirvāṇa some 250 years earlier at the famous Pārasnath Hills, in Bihar. They also maintain that the cātu-yāma-saṃvara (the four-fold restraint) attributed to Nātaputta by the Pali canon was actually the teaching of Pārśva, in whose tradition Mahāvīra was born and which he reformed by adding one more saṃvara, and also by instituting a well organized community of monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen. In view of the fact that the Pali scriptures testify to

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22. Ibid., p. 64.

the presence of a large number of Niganṭha laymen, including Vappa an uncle of the Buddha,<sup>23</sup> the Jain tradition of Pārśva is now generally accepted. Scholars disagree however, on the date of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa and place this event in 467 B.C., some sixteen years after the Buddha's death.

Little is known of Mahāvīra's personal life, and the traditional biographies<sup>24</sup> read very much like those of the Buddha. Mahāvīra, who is also called Vardhamāna, was the son of Siddhārtha, a kṣatriya chieftain of the Licchavis, and of Trīśālā, a sister of king Ceṭaka of Vaiśālī. He was born at a place called Kuṇḍagrāma, near modern Patna, in Bihar. Through his mother he was related to the major royal families of that time, particularly of Videha, Magadha and Campā. He was, according to one tradition, married to Yaśodā, who bore him a daughter called Anojā. Mahāvīra, it is said, wanted to renounce the household stage in life early in his youth, but in deference to the wishes of his parents waited until their death; then at the age of twenty-eight he became a Jain mendicant in the tradition of Pārśva.

For twelve years Mahāvīra led a life of severe austerities, discarding even his loincloth in the second year. Henceforth he went about naked, wandering in the Gangetic valley, suffering extreme privation, and practicing the virtues of a great saint. In his third year he was joined by Makkhali Gosāla, who witnessed a great many miracles performed by Mahāvīra and left the latter after six years of wandering together in distant parts and among the wild tribes of Bengal and Bihar. In the thirteenth year, after a prolonged fast lasting for several weeks, Mahāvīra,

outside the town Jṛmbhikagrāma, on the northern bank of the river Rjupalika, in the field of the householder Samaga, under a Sāla tree, in deep meditation, reached complete and full, the unobstructed, unimpeded, infinite and supreme, best knowledge and intuition, called kevala.<sup>25</sup>

He now became an omniscient:

He knew and saw all conditions of the worlds of gods, men and demons; whence they came, whither they are born as men or animals or became gods or hellish beings, the ideas, the thoughts of their mind, the food, doings, desires, the open and secret deeds of all living beings in the whole world; the Arhat (Holy), for whom there is no secret, knew and

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23. Dictionary of Pali Proper Names.

24. Hermann G. Jacobi (tr.), Jaina Sūtras, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884. Sacred Books of the East, vol. 22. Bool Chand, Lord Mahavira, Benaras: Jain Cultural Research Society, 1948.

25. Jaina Sūtras, p. 264.

saw all conditions of all living beings in the world, what they thought, spoke, or did at any time.<sup>26</sup>

He was now recognized as a Jina (the Victor), Sarvajña (the Omniscient) and above all, a Tīrthaṅkara.

Immediately after this event, Mahāvīra, it is said, proceeded to a place in the neighborhood where a big yāṇa was being organized by a brāhmaṇ Somilācārya and preached his first sermon, denouncing the sacrifice and converting eleven learned brāhmaṇs assembled there who became his chief disciples called gaṇadharas. Chief of them was Indrabhūti Gautama who received the Master's words that were compiled at a later stage in the canons of the Jains, called the Aṅgas.

Mahāvīra spent thirty years of his life as a Tīrthaṅkara and entered Nirvāṇa at the age of seventy-two, leaving behind him a well organized community of Jains consisting of 'fourteen thousand monks, thirty-six thousand nuns, one hundred and fifty thousand laymen and three hundred and fifty-eight thousand laywomen.'<sup>27</sup>

This vast community of the Nigaṇṭhas (Jain monks) and their upāsakas (lay devotees) must have included a large number of the followers of the ancient order of Pārśva. Modern Jain scholars maintain that Pārśva's community of monks observed only four vows, viz., ahimsā (non-violence), saīya (refraining from untruthfulness), asteya (refraining from stealing) and aparigraha (renouncing all worldly possessions), included in the cātu-yāma-saṃvara of the Pali canon. It is held on the evidence of a late Jain text called Uttarajijhayaṇa-sutta<sup>28</sup> that the monks of Pārśva's order were not given to the practice of nudity but considered it purely optional for a Jain ascetic. Mahāvīra, it is said, introduced several major changes in the reorganization of this community. He is said not only to have introduced a fifth vow consisting of brahmacarya (complete celibacy), but also to have made nudity, a mark of total renunciation, a binding condition on all monks. He also instituted a special class of laymen and laywomen called śramaṇopāsakas ('devotees of the śramaṇa') who, unlike the multitude of the ordinary lay members comparable to the Buddhist upāsakas, undertook to observe a series of twelve vows<sup>29</sup> restricting their mundane activities and worldly possessions, and strove to lead a life of complete renunciation in the footsteps of the Master. These śramaṇopāsakas were the true Jains, the dedicated supporters of Mahāvīra, who patronized only the Nigaṇṭhas to the exclusion of all

26. Ibid., p. 264.

27. Bool Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

28. Hermann G. Jacobi (tr.), *Gaina Sūtras*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895. Sacred Books of the East, vol. 45.

29. See R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga A Survey of the Mediaeval Sravakacaras*, London: Oxford U. Press, 1963, pp. 14 ff.



other śramaṇas. Ānanda, a lay disciple of Mahāvīra declares:

Truly, Reverend sir, it does not befit me from this day forward to praise and worship any man of a heretic community or any of the Devas or objects of reverence of a heretic community; or without being first addressed by them to address them or converse with them; or to give them or supply them with food and drink or delicacies or dainties except it be by the command of the king or the community or any powerful man or a Deva or by the orders of one's elders or by the exigencies of living.<sup>30</sup>

The śramaṇopāsakas, with their exclusive dedication, not only maintained a large number of Nigaṇṭha monks and nuns, but also provided the lay Jains with the necessary leadership, both in secular and spiritual matters. Even when communities of Jains were without monks, as for instance in South India in medieval times, the presence of the śramaṇopāsakas prevented the gradual absorption of the community into brāhmaṇical Hinduism. It was the absence of such leadership that mainly brought about the gradual extinction of Buddhist communities in India.

Despite this organization, about a century and a half after the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra, the community of Jains divided into two sects on the controversial point of total renunciation. Those monks who took Mahāvīra's nakedness as purely optional maintained the practice of wearing robes made of white cloths and hence were called Śvetāmbaras ('white-clad'). Those who declared the Master's nakedness to be not only exemplary but obligatory for the attainment of the state of a vīra-rāga ('the passionless'), adhered to that practice and were called Digambaras ('sky-clad'). According to tradition the schism took place during the reign of the Mauryan Emperor Candragupta (c. 317-293 B.C.), who is believed to have abdicated the throne and to have accepted the vows of a Digambara monk. The Digambaras led by their pontiff Bhadrabāhu declared the Śvetāmbaras as apostate and condemned the scriptures compiled by them under the guidance of Sthūlabhadra as spurious.

Since then the two sects have remained indifferent to each other, the Digambaras insisting that the Śvetāmbara monks are no better than their more ascetic householders and refusing to worship at the Śvetāmbara shrines with their highly decorated images of the Jinas. The Digambara shrines still depict their Tīrthaṅkaras as naked, but the sect has all but lost the order of monks, their place being taken by the śramaṇopāsakas of varying grades. By contrast, the Śvetāmbaras still have a large group of mendicants comparable in size to the Order of monks in Buddhist countries like Ceylon or Burma. These two sects are also separated from each other geographically. The Digambaras

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30. Bool Chand, op. cit., p. 54.



are found mostly in the south of Deccan and the Śvetāmbaras are concentrated in the West, mostly in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

But for the sole controversy on the definition of total renunciation, the two sects remain in full agreement on all other teachings of Mahāvīra. These can be summed up in three basic terms, viz., *anekāntavāda* (non-absolutism), *karmavāda* (the doctrine of karma) and *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), dealing respectively with the nature of reality, the relation between Matter and Spirit, and the path of salvation.

The doctrine of non-absolutism follows from a basic Jain theory that a thing, i.e., an object of knowledge, consists of three things, viz., a substance (*dravya*), innumerable qualities (*guṇa*), and an infinite number of forms or modifications (*paryāna*) through which the substance passes in the infinity of time and space. In this process of constant flux, the substance is characterized by the simultaneous operation of origination (of new forms), destruction (of old forms) and permanence (of the substance itself). An object like the soul (*jīva*), for instance, is eternal, since consciousness, which is its essential nature, never abandons it. But the same soul is also impermanent, since at any given moment, it must relinquish an old form while it acquires a new one. To declare, as the Vedāntin or the Sāṅkhya does, that the soul is only eternal, not subject to any change whatsoever, is an Absolutist point of view (*ekānta*) that totally denies the reality of change. To declare, on the other hand, as the Buddhists did, that nothing is eternal, and that things are only series of momentary flashes, is another extreme (*ekānta*). The former denies the reality of *saṃsāra* (the cycle of transmigration), the latter fails to explain *Nirvāṇa* (the state of final bliss). The Jain position takes into consideration both the substance and its modifications, and maintains that the soul is eternal from the point of view of substance and non-eternal from the point of view of modifications. It thus abandons the extremes (*ekānta*) of other schools and holds that the soul is bound as well as free when looked at from these two different viewpoints (*anekānta*).

From this unique position of non-absolutism follows the equally original Jain doctrine of karma. According to the Jains, a soul (*jīva*, a living being, *ātman*) is omniscient when it abides in its natural state (*svabhāva*). This is the state of freedom (*mokṣa*) in which the soul is endowed with infinite knowledge and infinite bliss.

In its unnatural state, called *saṃsāra*, the soul is also material, as it is capable of contraction and expansion, and is co-extensive with the body which it inhabits. This unnatural state of the soul has no beginning in time, nor is it the result of any outside agency like the Creator of the Theists, or the *Niyati* of the Ājīvikas. During this state the soul moves in the cycle of transmigration bound not only by its gross body which is visible to the eyes, but also enmeshed by a special kind of matter consisting of extremely subtle atoms. This matter, when bound with the soul, is capable of obstructing the latter's innate nature of omniscience, and is technically called karma. Molecules composing the organ of mind, the organ of speech and the body

when activated produce vibrations in the soul. Such vibrations are technically called yoga. The karmic matter flows into the soul through the channels of activity, and this process is called āsrava (influx). The influx of the karmic matter, however, does not automatically result in a new bondage of the soul. That happens only when the soul is actuated by passions and indulges in such evil things as wrong belief, non-abstinence (from evil deeds) or negligence. Then, as a wet surface absorbs dust, there takes place the involution of the karmic matter with the space-points of the soul. This is technically called bondage or bandha. The karmic matter thus absorbed and united with the soul remains with it for a certain duration of time, sometimes lasting as long as millions of years and sometimes as short as a moment, at the end of which it matures and yields fruits corresponding to the passions and deeds that caused the bandha. The Jains divide these karmas into eight kinds: the knowledge-obscuring karmas produce non-comprehension of objects. The perception-covering karmas produce non-perception of objects. The feeling-producing karmas cause pleasant and unpleasant feelings. The faith-deluding karmas cause disbelief in the true nature of reality. The conduct-deluding karmas cause non-abstinence (want of restraint). The life-determining karma determines the span of life in a particular existence. The name-karmas decide the 'names' of such as infernal beings, human beings, celestial beings and animals. The status determining karmas determine high and low status. And obstructive karmas stand in the way of giving, gaining and enjoyment. Thus the karmas, like a giant computer, take note of each and every passion and action and work out their consequences for each individual in strict accordance with the law of moral retribution without the aid or the supervision of a conscious being like the God. And when the karmas have yielded their respective results the karmic matter disassociates (nirjarā) of its own accord from the soul, only to be re-absorbed by a new series of actions and passions keeping the wheel of saṃsāra in constant movement:

Each soul indeed has taken in (enjoyed) successively all the molecules of matter in the entire universe and has cast them off. And each soul has been revolving innumerable times in the cycle of matter. There is no point in the entire space of the universe, which has not been the seat of birth of a soul. In this way each soul has been many times roaming, occupying all points in the cycle of space.<sup>31</sup>

The number of souls thus undergoing the sufferings of transmigration is infinite. Beings are led into different states, becoming celestial or human beings according to their good deeds, and infernal or animal beings through bad karma. But the largest number consists of beings with little or no intelligence, such as insects, moths and worms, with only four, three or even two sense-faculties, and the vast vegetable

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31. S.A. Jain, Sarvārthasiddhi, Calcutta: Vira Sasana Sangha, 1960, p. 57.

kingdom that has but one faculty, viz., that of touch. Vegetable bodies are extremely complex; some plants may be inhabited by only one individual soul; others may serve as a collective body for innumerable souls who are born together and die a common death, as also is the case with the four elements, earth, water, air and fire. The Jains, unlike people of any other religion, consider that there are countless souls that have these elements as their bodies, so that, for instance, when a match is struck, innumerable souls simultaneously spring into existence, having the flame itself as their common body, only to meet a collective death the moment the flame is extinguished.

The process of this transmigration of the soul may be beginningless, but it is not endless. For omniscience is the true nature of all these beings, including even animals, and those imprisoned in sticks and stones. Even in these states, the characteristic of the soul, viz., consciousness, is not totally lost. But the way to freedom from karma is not automatic as in the system of Makkhali Gosāla. There the beings are neither bound to their states by their own actions, nor will they be freed by their own will. In the teachings of Mahāvīra, there is no room for this fatalism. Karma is caused by passion; the removal of the latter will also remove the karma. Freedom from saṃsāra and consequently the attainment of omniscience is possible by exertion, and by one's own exertion only. This is because Jainism does not recognize a Creator or an Almighty God who might intervene and save a being from the laws of karma. But it recognizes the existence of a number of Teachers or Tīrthaṅkaras who by the dint of their exertion develop their innate wisdom and realize the true nature of the self and that of the karma. With that saving knowledge they are able to arrest (saṃvara) the rise of new passions and consequently of new karma. With boundless energy and diligence they then apply themselves to severe penances and yogic practices and thus gradually succeed in loosening the grip of the accumulated karma. When they are entirely free from passions and from the shackles of karma, their innate quality of consciousness reaches the state of omniscience. Henceforth, until their life-span is completed, the Tīrthaṅkaras teach the law to the suffering world and finally pass away into the state of a pure spirit. Mahāvīra was only one of many such Tīrthaṅkaras who have appeared from beginningless time and who will also appear for all eternity. Only a few can aspire to be a Tīrthaṅkara, as the attainment of this calls for special discipline, but those who follow the path are also assured of the same state of complete liberation with the full glory of omniscience, as that of Mahāvīra.

Right faith (samyak-darśana), right knowledge (samyak-jñāna) and right conduct (samyak-cāritra) together constitute the path to liberation. Through right faith an aspirant believes in the true nature of the soul, the non-soul, the influx and bondage of karma, the stoppage and dissociation from karma, and liberation. Right faith is gained not only by the innate disposition of the soul that is never completely stifled by any karma, but also by the acquisition of knowledge from those who have fully realized it. This cannot be had from the false gods (devas) like Indra, Varuṇa, Agni, etc., who are clearly subject to passions and are not themselves free from the cycle

of transmigration. Nor can it be had from the false scriptures (śāstras) like the Vedas, or the Brāhmaṇas and similar texts, that not only propound absolutist views (ekānta) but also enjoin such grossly irreligious acts as sacrifices involving violence that can lead only to hell. Nor can it be gained from such false teachers (gurus) as the brāhmaṇas who worship false gods and perform sacrifices, or from those śramaṇas who adhere to false doctrines and indulge in penances that are not conducive to the complete cessation of passions. A true aspirant therefore abandons all these and takes refuge in a Goḍ (i.e., a teacher) who is passionless and omniscient, in a scripture that contains his teachings, and in a preceptor (guru) who actively leads a life according to those teachings. All Jains worship Mahāvīra and the other Tīrthaṅkaras, but the relation between the disciple and the teacher is strictly impersonal. The famous Jain litany (namaskāra-mantra) has no place for an historical person, but refers only to an arhant (the holy), a siddha (the perfect), an ācārya (a teacher), an upādhyāya (a preceptor) and a sādhu (an aspirant). The first two have achieved omniscience and the last three are designations of a Jain ascetic.

The moral basis of 'right conduct' is ahimsā (non-violence). This is achieved by the renunciation of all activities that proceed from passions such as anger, pride, deceit and greed and which eventually or instantly involve violence within oneself as well as towards others. All life is sacred and should not be wilfully violated; least of all those of the animals who cannot help being what they are and are but suffering the fruits of their own karma. Violence against the infinite number of souls with only one sense-faculty cannot be avoided; but it can be limited to the absolute minimum for a monk who has renounced all worldly activities, and it can be permitted for a householder with discretion. The Jain scriptures therefore give considerable prominence to the dietary rules for a Jain. He must not only not eat meat in any circumstances, but must also refrain from alcohol and honey. Even in his vegetarian food he must exercise further care not to eat a large variety of uneatables (abhakṣya)<sup>32</sup> which include such things as the fruits of trees of the genus Ficus (Udumbara) and fruits with many seeds, to avoid a kind of a 'mass slaughter', and should confine his needs to fruits, grains and vegetables that are dry and to milk products that will not ferment.

The Vedic ancestors of the present day Hindus were evidently not vegetarians. The Upaniṣads and the Dharma Śāstras openly support animal sacrifices and even prescribe meat dishes as a special treat to an honored guest, particularly a brāhmaṇ. The Buddhists had monastic rules preventing the monks only from killing the animals but not from eating meat freely offered by their lay devotees. It seems safe to conclude that the widespread vegetarianism of the present day Hindus, even in times of a crippling famine, is very much due to the influence of the Jains who not only made vegetarianism binding on their followers but even raised it to the hallmark of true

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32. Jaina Yoga A Survey of the Mediaeval Sravakacaras, pp. 110ff.



Āryanhood. This preoccupation with ahimsā is again evident in the long lists of trades and professions forbidden to a Jain householder. He may not earn his livelihood from charcoal, from destroying plants, from hewing and digging, nor may he engage in trades involving milling and mutilation, the use of fire, water, alcohol or forbidden foodstuffs, and slavery and animal husbandry. Under a special vow peculiar to the Jains, called aparigraha (non-possession) there appeared an elaborate list of possessions (such as movable and immovable properties) that a householder had gradually to renounce until he was ready to take the advanced vows of a monk entailing total renunciation of all possessions.

The limitations thus imposed on the activities of a Jain layman must have restricted the spread of Jainism to the upper and lower middle classes or the vaiśya rank. The Buddhist texts attest to the presence of a large number of kṣatriyas among the followers of Mahāvīra, himself a kṣatriya, and even boast about the conversion to Buddhism of such eminent Jain laymen as Sīha, a General of the Licchavis, and Princes like Abhayarājakumāra and Asibandhakaputta. The number of such people must have been relatively small, and like many other kṣatriyas in the history of ancient India they might have been patrons of other śramaṇas as well as the brāhmaṇs. The latter, with a few exceptions, could hardly have embraced Jainism which not only denied the authority of the Vedas and the divinity of the Vedic gods, but also deprived the brāhmaṇs of their chief means of livelihood by condemning the sacrifices and other rituals connected with domestic sacraments. The śūdras, given as they were to professions expressly disfavoured by the Jain monks, could not have been admitted as full members of the Jain community. The class that best suited the Jain ethics were the vaiśyas, the members of the merchant rank, who were the main supporters of Jainism in the days of Mahāvīra, and have remained so even to this day. The Jains did not recognize the theological basis provided by the Puruṣasūkta for the institution of the four ranks (varṇas), and to that extent may be said to have opposed the caste system. But the opposition, if it ever existed, was purely a theoretical one, and was in all probability restricted to a denial of the supremacy of the brāhmaṇical caste. In actual practice the Jains remained indifferent to the general social structure, and in medieval times, as will be seen below, even claimed to be the originators of the system of hereditary ranks.

As for a Jain monk, he owned nothing and, in the case of the Digambaras, possessed not even a loincloth. He spent his wandering life actively engaged in the exercise of severe penances conducive to the loosening of the bonds of karma. Prominent among these was the act of fasting which might last for days and sometimes even for weeks, a practice that survives even to this day among the Jains. He must not accept an invitation to a meal nor partake of food that has been specially prepared for him. The strict dietary rules limited the houses he could approach for begging, and must have led him to emigrate from place to place in search of new patrons. He was not allowed the use of any means of conveyance nor an umbrella nor a pair of sandals to protect himself from the scorching heat. He must not bathe, nor may



he use a brush to clean his teeth. Services of a barber to shave his head were forbidden: he must pluck his hair in five handfuls. Thus living a life of great hardship voluntarily undertaken, he should near the end of his days court death by fasting, and so die the death of a saint.

### The Buddhists

Siddhārtha Gautama, the historical founder of Buddhism, was also born a kṣatriya, like his contemporary Mahāvīra, and was surrounded by the śramaṇas of his time. He also renounced the worldly life in the prime of his youth and wandered for some six years practicing the most severe penances. But whereas Mahāvīra is said to have attained the desired goal of omniscience after twelve years of such penance, Gautama turned completely away from his austere life as is described in a famous Discourse called 'The Lion's Roar':

Because I ate so little, all my limbs became like the knotted joints of withered creepers; because I ate so little, my buttocks became like a bullock's hoof; because I ate so little, my protruding backbone became like a string of balls; because I ate so little, my gaunt ribs became like the crazy rafters of a tumble-down shed; because I ate so little, the pupils of my eyes appeared lying low and deep in their sockets as sparkles of water in a deep well appear lying low and deep;... But I, even by this procedure, by this course, by this mortification, did not reach states of further-men or the excellent knowledge and insight befitting the Āryans. What was the cause of this? It was that by these there is no reaching the Āryan intuitive wisdom which, when reached, is Āryan, leading onwards, and which leads onwards the doer of it to the complete destruction of anguish.<sup>33</sup>

Gautama's bold condemnation of the revered ideal of the tapas as non-Āryan and his subsequent return to moderation marks a great departure from the ancient śramaṇa tradition. From now on he was not following any but his own path, this 'Āryan Middle Path' through which he attained the 'Supreme Enlightenment'. He now not only claimed to be a 'Jina' and an 'Omniscient' in the manner of Gosāla and Mahāvīra, but even claimed to be a 'Master of the Vedas', and a 'Brahmavādin'.<sup>34</sup> He was thus a true śramaṇa as well as being a 'true brāhmaṇ'.

This Middle Path of the Buddha is set forth in his first sermon entitled 'The Rolling of the Wheel of the Law':

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33. Majjhimanikāya I, 80. (Further Dialogues of the Buddha, I, p. 56).

34. Vinaya Pitakam, I, pp. 3-8.

These two extremes, monks, should not be followed by one who has gone forth (from the life of a householder to the life of a mendicant). Which two? That which is, among sense pleasures, addiction to attractive sense-pleasures, low, of the common, of the average man, un-Āryan, not connected with the goal; and that which is addiction to self-torment, ill, un-Āryan, not connected with the goal. Now, monks, without adopting either of these two extremes, there is a middle course, fully awakened to by the Truthfinder, making for a vision, making for knowledge, which conduces to calming (of passion), to super-knowledge (of the four Truths), to awakening, to nirvāṇa.... And what, monks, is this middle course? It is this Āryan eightfold way itself, that is to say: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right mode of living, right endeavour, right mindfulness, right concentration.<sup>35</sup>

But the Middle Path of the Buddha was not merely a return to a life of moderation. It was also a turning away from the interminable speculations regarding problems of the Self, problems that were central to all mendicants, whether of the śramaṇa or of the brāhmaṇical persuasion. These speculations ranged from the absolute Idealism of the Upaniṣads that affirmed a theory of an Eternal Self to the uncompromising Materialism of Ajita propounding total annihilation of the soul after death. Between the two poles lay a large number of doctrines such as the Anekāntavāda of the Nigaṇṭhas and the Niyativāda of the Ājīvikas. These holy men, the Buddha said, proclaimed themselves to be free from all possessions, but were possessed by their dogmas; they professed to be free from attachments, but were actually addicted to the intellectual luxury of speculation. The Buddha, having climbed 'the peak of wisdom' had seen these people caught in their self-woven 'net of Brahma' (brahmajāla), lost in what he boldly called a thicket, a wilderness, a puppet-show, coils and fetters of speculations.<sup>36</sup> He did not subscribe to any of these dogmas and, as he explained to his disciple Māluṅkyaputta, did not care to pronounce an answer on any of the questions raised:

The religious life, Māluṅkyaputta, does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal; or that the world is not eternal; it does not depend on the dogma that the world is finite or that the world is infinite; it does not depend on the dogma that the soul and body are identical, or that they are non-identical; it does not depend on the dogma that the Buddha (since he has brought an end to saṃsāra) exists after death or does not exist after death. Whether

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35. Ibid., p. 10. Book of the Discipline, part 4, p. 15.

36. Majjhimanikāya, I, p. 486.

this dogma obtains or that, there still remain birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair, for the extinction of which in the present life I am prescribing.<sup>37</sup>

He might well have pronounced a dogma or elucidated a metaphysical point like the other 'saints', had this been conducive to the extinction of the saṃsāra. But such was not the case:

I have not elucidated, Mālun̄kyaputta, that the world is eternal... or that the Saint does not exist after death, because Mālun̄kyaputta, this profits not, nor has it to do with the fundamentals of religion, nor does it tend to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, supreme wisdom and nirvāṇa, therefore have I not elucidated it.<sup>38</sup>

This was a most radical departure from all existing notions of a teacher and of a 'Supremely Enlightened Person'. One of the few non-Buddhists who were able to perceive this extraordinary difference between the Buddha and the other teachers was Aggika Vacchagotta, evidently an ascetic of a brāhmanical Order, who asked a pointed question: 'But has Gautama any theory of his own?' The answer Vacchagotta received was short and emphatic: 'The Tathāgata (Truthfinder). O Vaccha, is free from all theories.'<sup>39</sup>

If the Buddha did not subscribe to any dogmas and condemned them all as being irrelevant to the leading of a holy life, how did he account for the 'Right View' (sammā diṭṭhi), the first and foremost of the eight constituents of the Āryan Middle Path? The Middle Path of the Buddha was not one more path, nor was the Right View one more view; it was the very cessation of all views:

The world, Kaccāyana, is for the most part attached to two (propositions)--existence as well as non-existence. 'That everything exists (Substantialism)' is, Kaccāyana, one extreme; 'That everything does not exist (Nihilism)' is another. Not accepting either of these two extremes, the Tathāgata proclaims the truth (dharma) from the Middle Position: conditioned by the ignorance (avidyā) are the constructions (saṃskāra); the stopping of the constructions is from the utter fading away and stopping of the ignorance...<sup>40</sup>

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37. Ibid., I, p. 430.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., I, p. 486.

40. Saṃyuttanikāya, ii, 17.

All things in the realm of subject and object (matter, sensations, perceptions, predispositions and consciousness) are conditioned and consequently are impermanent (anitya), ill (duḥkha) and devoid of self (anātma--devoid of an abiding principle such as the Ātman). Ignorance (avidyā) of the true nature of things leads beings to seek permanence in what is momentary, ease in what is essentially associated with suffering, and identity in what is devoid of a 'self'. These perverted views lead one to the formulation of one or another of the theories, either of Substantialism or Nihilism, driving them to undertake different kinds of rites and rituals ending in self-indulgence or in self-mortification. This can only result in frustration and further vain searches after new dogmas and new practices, binding the person to an endless cycle of births and deaths:

Monks, it is by not awakening to, not penetrating the four Āryan Truths that there is thus this long faring-on and running-on both for me and for you...<sup>41</sup>

Incalculable, monks, is the beginning of this faring-on. The earliest point is not revealed of the running-on, the faring-on, of being hindered by ignorance, fettered by craving...<sup>42</sup>

However, one can discard the perverted views by the understanding of the true nature of things; then all constructions are ended and the mind is released from the 'entire mass of suffering' (dukkhakkhandha).

A belief in the efficacy of karma and the cycle of saṃsāra is necessary for the undertaking of a holy life, but freedom of mind from all other preconceived ideas of the self and the Brahman was the prerequisite of one who wished to follow the path of the Buddha. The Buddha replaced all elaborate rites and painful penances by a simple and straightforward method and exalted it as

the one and only path leading to the purification of beings, to passing beyond grief and lamentation, to the dying out of all ill and misery, to the attainment of right method, and to the realization of nirvāṇa.<sup>43</sup>

This path consisted of 'a steady alertness of inward vision' (satipaṭṭhāna) directed to the contemplation of the true characteristics (anitya, duḥkha, anātma) of the body, of the feelings, of the mind, and of the content of consciousness. Endowed with this mindfulness,

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41. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and I. B. Horner, The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha, London: Cassell and Co., 1948, p. 166.

42. Ibid., p. 167.

43. Dialogues of the Buddha, I, p. 78.

the instructed disciple disregards material shapes, disregards feeling, disregards perceptions, disregards constructions, disregards consciousness; by disregarding he is passionless; through passionlessness he is freed; in freedom, the knowledge comes to be: I am freed, and he has fore-knowledge: Destroyed is birth, lived is the holy-life, done is what is to be done, there is no more of being such and such.<sup>44</sup>

### Śramaṇa and Brāhmaṇical Conflicts

Although the Middle Path was condemned by the Nigaṇṭhas and the Ājīvikas as a life of 'abundance', it soon found acceptance from the traditionally moderate ascetics of the brāhmaṇical Order. Foremost among these were a group of a thousand jaṭilas (matted hair ascetics) of Gayā practising penances in a fire-hall (aggi-sālā).<sup>45</sup> According to the Pali canons these were won over by the Buddha by a display of superior psychic powers. The abandoning of the 'sacred fire' by these revered jaṭilas and their public acknowledgement of the Buddha as their new teacher in the presence of the king of Magadha must have had a profound effect on the populace in general and on the rich and well-to-do merchant class, the mainstay of all ascetics. The state of unfailing mindfulness of which the Buddha spoke was not easy for a man of the household given to the pleasures of the senses, to ill-will, to sloth and torpor, to flurry and worry, and above all to the endless series of rites and rituals. The Buddha's path was essentially for a recluse who had, like the Buddha, rid himself of all possessions and had voluntarily accepted a life free from all worldly responsibilities, a life of a 'homeless wanderer'.

Full of hindrance is household life, a path for the dust of passion.  
Free as the air is the life of him who has renounced all worldly things.<sup>46</sup>

Many hundreds of young men in the prime of their youth abandoned their professions and homes to assume the yellow robes of a monk. The sight of these new and young ascetics must have caused a great commotion in a society dedicated to the service of parents, stability of family life, and above all to the preservation of the ancient traditions of varṇa and āśrama. The Pali scriptures themselves have preserved for us the immediate reaction of a society so ruthlessly shaken by the new movement:

Now at that time very distinguished young men belonging to respectable families of Magadha were leading holy lives under the Lord.

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44. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and I. B. Horner, op. cit., p. 101.

45. Vinaya Piṭakam, I, p. 24.

46. Dialogues of the Buddha, I, p. 24.



People looked down upon them, criticised and disparaged them saying: 'The recluse Gotama /Gautama/ wants to make (us) childless, the recluse Gotama is bent on making (us) widows, the recluse Gotama gets along by breaking up families.'<sup>47</sup>

The Buddha's reply to this accusation was one of calm indifference:

Verily great heroes, Truthfinders,  
lead by what is true dhamma /dharma/.  
Who would be jealous of the wise  
led by dhamma?<sup>48</sup>

Asceticism was not unknown to the Indians; nor was the sight of a mendicant a novelty. The āśrama (stage of life) of the sannyāsin (a wandering ascetic) was long accepted as a natural aim of life and was resorted to by the pious towards the end of a fruitful household life (gṛhasthāśrama). During the state of householder, a person, at least of the higher ranks, discharged his duties towards his parents, saw his sons well established in their professions, performed the required sacraments enjoined by the scriptures and tradition, and prepared himself for the final stages of retirement and renunciation. The break from normal life was gradual, since, in the stage of retirement to the forest (vānaprastha) he would still be accompanied by his wife and they would lead together a life of chastity and poverty subsisting on the fruits gathered freely or on the gifts gratefully provided by their kith and kin. Complete renunciation (sannyāsa) came only at the end of this long active life, when a man was fairly advanced in age, and was then considered to have earned the privilege of leading a solitary life free from all family duties and subsisting entirely on the 'country's alms-food' (ratṭha-piṇḍa).

It is not possible to determine the period at which this graduated system of the āśramas came to be accepted as an ideal for the upper strata of Indian society. It appears to have evolved by the time of the Āraṇyakas as a result of an integration of the brāhmaṇical institution of yajña with the śramaṇa tendencies of renunciation and asceticism. A proper execution of the duties of one's position and the performance of sacrifices and sacraments were dependent on a stable family life. A person who after completing his student life (brahmacaryāśrama) either refused to marry or who prematurely abandoned his household was anti-social and was treated as a vagabond or at best a beggar, deserving only food given as charity. Now and then, no doubt, there would appear among these a person of rare spiritual awakening who, like Gautama the Buddha, might be treated as an exception to the rule and be given

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47. Vinaya Piṭakam, I, p. 43.

48. Book of the Discipline, part 4, p. 56.

the honors due to a person of the sannyāsin stage. The Buddhist scriptures are fully aware of this:

While he was still a young man, without a grey hair on his head, in the beauty of his early manhood, he has gone forth from the household life into the homeless state... though his father and mother were unwilling, and wept, their cheeks being wet with tears, nevertheless he cut off his hair and beard, and donned the yellow robes, and went out from the household life into the homeless state....<sup>49</sup>

But Gautama was not seeking only his own emancipation: he was a 'Buddha'; he was determined to show the Way to thousands of others and was not to be stopped by worldly considerations of a stable society or by the tears of the wailing wives who rightly accused him of driving them into a forced widowhood and involuntary childlessness. For them also the Buddha, after great hesitation, opened the gates of freedom by founding an Order of Nuns. This new Order was admittedly subordinated to the Order of Monks, but the sisters were declared to be equals in the spiritual progress towards Nirvāṇa.

In advocating a life of homelessness not only for a handful of extraordinary individuals, but almost as a norm for all men and women so inclined, the Buddha had shaken the very foundations of a society built on the concept of the four āśramas. In repudiating the Vedas and the wisdom of their metaphysical speculations, the divinity of the Vedic gods and the efficacy of the sacrifices offered to them, the Buddha had already challenged the sources of orthodox brāhmaṇism. With his new band of young and ardent followers, drawn mostly from a stratum of society that not only enjoyed but even conferred social status, he now questioned the claims of the brāhmaṇs to a position of superiority over the other three ranks. To those who claimed that 'only brāhmaṇs are pure, not non-brāhmaṇs,'<sup>50</sup> the Buddha reminded that 'the brāhmaṇ women have their periods, conceive, give birth, and give suck,'<sup>51</sup> thus emphasizing that the brāhmaṇs too belong to the species of human beings. To those who relied on the scriptural authority (of the Puruṣa-sūkta) for their superior origins and maintained that 'only brāhmaṇs are sons of Brahmā, born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā...', the Buddha pointed out that 'in some of the adjacent districts there were only two castes--masters and slaves, and that a member of the one can become a member of the other,'<sup>52</sup> suggesting thereby that the distinctions of rank were man-made and were not of a divine origin. Even supposing that the

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49. Dialogues of the Buddha, I, p. 148.

50. Ananda K. Coomarswamy and I. B. Horner, op. cit., p. 125.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

Brahmā of the scriptures did exist, the Buddha questioned whether brāhmaṇs, blinded by passion and pride in their own birth, and shackled with wives and possessions, would ever achieve union with Brahmā. He suggested rather that such union was more likely to be granted to Buddhist monks of humble birth, perhaps even of low rank, who had managed to clear the obstacles of anger and malice, and had attained self-control and purity of mind.<sup>53</sup> The Buddha was indifferent towards the social implications of rank but was emphatic in repudiating its spiritual implications; for he insisted that a man's spiritual status and destiny were determined not by family and birth but by his own character and actions (karma).

The Pali scriptures emphasize that individual brāhmaṇs, thus confronted by the Buddha's invincible logic, were converted to Buddhism and even became zealous supporters of his cause. But the brāhmaṇical society at large, led by the learned lawgivers, the upholders of the ancient Vedic tradition, appears to have been alarmed by his bold views and still bolder utterances addressed primarily to the young and resourceful members of the kṣatriya and vaiśya ranks. A sudden defection from orthodoxy of thousands of young and able members of a stable society--according to the Pali chronicles<sup>54</sup> the number of monks expelled by Aśoka in purifying the Order alone amounted to 60,000--whether under the pressures of unstable political conditions or of controls exercised by an outdated priestly class, would not be overlooked even by those who held the most liberal attitudes towards the reorganization of that society. The defection here was not from one rank or one profession to another; it was to a new class or organized monkhood which, while it was contemptuous of the orthodox disciplines of āśrama and varṇa, could not offer a feasible alternative, its preoccupation being exclusively with the ideal of individual salvation. A new balance had to be struck between the interests of society and individual, between the ideals of social stability and of individual salvation, between action and renunciation. The Dharma Śāstras (like the codes of law enunciated by Viṣṇu, Yājñavalkya and Manu), and the great epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and especially the Mahābhārata, show unmistakable signs of this awareness and a new motivation behind their vigorous attempts to fortify the battered foundations of the old society.

The main point of the Buddha's criticism that the brāhmaṇs themselves had fallen from the ancient disciplines of austerity and restraint was not, it seems, lost on the compilers of the Dharma Śāstras. In defining the duties and the privileges of the different ranks the lawgivers henceforth set very high standards for brāhmaṇs, admonishing them all to lead a life of voluntary poverty, dedicated to the study of the Vedas and the performance of sacrifices. While the lawgivers recommended to them the third and the fourth āśramas (of retirement and renunciation), they also reminded them that 'A twice-born man who seeks final liberation, without having

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53. Dialogues of the Buddha, I, pp. 300-320 (Tevijja-sutta).

54. Mahāvamsa, V, 270-1.

studied the Vedas, without having begotten sons, and without having offered sacrifices, sinks downwards.<sup>55</sup> Although addressed to the brāhmaṇs, the warning was equally or even more pertinent to the two lower ranks, especially the kṣatriyas, to which the Buddha had belonged and from which had come a large number of his 'young ascetics', the rebels against the āśrama discipline. Under the heading of rāja-dharma (duties of a king) the lawbooks dwell at length on the sacred duties of a kṣatriya to his kingdom, to his subjects, to the Gods and the brāhmaṇs, and above all to the proper maintenance of the orders of varṇa (rank) and āśrama. Chapter after chapter of the Mahābhārata are filled with spirited admonitions to Yudhiṣṭhira (the eldest of the five Pāṇḍavas) not to yield to an unmanly and premature desire of 'renunciation' after winning a bloody war in the cause of justice. The author of the Mahābhārata in this connection reminds him of a famous discourse that took place between King Janaka of Videha (the brahmavādin of the Upaniṣads) and his queen when her Lord too was resolved to abandon his kingdom in order to lead a life of mendicancy. Reading between the lines, the discourse is an impassioned plea by the lawgivers to desist from the Buddha's path and a call for the restoration of the duties of varṇa and āśrama:

Casting off wealth and children and wives and precious possessions of various kinds and the established path for acquiring religious merit and fire (sacrifice) itself, king Janaka shaved his head (and assumed the garb of a mendicant). His dear spouse beheld him deprived of wealth, installed in the observance of the vow of mendicancy, . . . and prepared to subsist upon a handful of barley fallen off from the stalk. Approaching her lord, at a time when no one was with him, the queen, endued with great strength of mind, fearlessly and in wrath, told him these words fraught with reason: Why hast thou adopted a life of mendicancy, abandoning thy kingdom full of wealth and corn? A handful of fallen off barley cannot be proper for thee! . . . With this handful of barley, O king, shalt thou succeed in gratifying the guests, gods, Ṛṣis and Pitṛs? Alas, abandoned by all these, viz., gods, guests, and Pitṛs, thou leadest a life of wandering mendicancy, O king, having cast off all action! Thou wert, before this, the supporter of thousands of brāhmaṇs versed in the three Vedas and of many more besides! How canst thou desire to beg of them thine own food today? Abandoning thy blazing prosperity, thou castest thine eyes around like a dog (for his food)! Thy mother hath today been made sonless by thee, and thy spouse, the princess of Kośala, a widow! These helpless kṣatriyas, expectant of fruit and religious merit, wait upon thee, placing all their hopes on thee! By killing those hopes of theirs, to what regions

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55. The Laws of Manu, VI, 37.



shalt thou go, O king, especially when salvation (mokṣa) is doubtful and creatures are dependent on actions? Sinful as thou art, thou hast neither this world nor the other, since thou wishest to live, having cast off thy wedded wife? . . . How couldst thy heart be set on that mode of life which recommends an earthen pot, and a staff, and which forces one to abandon his very clothes and which permits the acceptance of only a handful of barley after abandonment of everything? If, again, thou sayest that kingdom and a handful of barley are the same to thee, then why dost thou abandon the former! If, again, a handful of barley becomes an object of attachment with thee, . . . then who am I to thee, who art thou to me, and what can be thy grace to me? If thou beest inclined to grace, rule then this Earth! They that are desirous of happiness but are very poor and indigent and abandoned by friends may adopt Renunciation. But he who imitates those men by abandoning palatial mansions, acts improperly, indeed. . . . In this world, the food that is given by a charitable person is the sure support of the pious. If, therefore, the king does not give (food), where will the pious that are desirous of salvation go? They that have food (in their houses) are householders. Mendicants are supported by them. Life flows from food. Therefore, the giver of food is the giver of life. Coming out from among those that lead a domestic mode of life (gṛhasthāśrama), mendicants depend upon those very persons from whom they come. Those self-restrained men (of family), by doing this, acquire and enjoy fame and power. . . . They who, casting off the three Vedas, their usual occupations, and children, adopt a life of mendicancy by taking up the triple-headed crutch and the brown robe, are really persons of little understanding. . . . Therefore, O king, keeping thy passions under control, do thou win regions of bliss hereafter by supporting them that are truly pious amongst men of matted locks or clean-shaven heads, naked or clad in rags, or skins or brown robes! Who is there that is more virtuous than he who maintains his sacred fire, who performs sacrifices with presents of animals and dakṣiṇā (sacrificial fee), and who practices charity day and night?<sup>56</sup>

These words of the wife of Janaka might as well have been uttered by Yaśodharā, the deserted wife of Gautama, to her Lord. They are reminiscent of the outbursts recorded in the Pali scriptures of an enraged society whose youth had set its face against the established order. They also echo the words of the Bhagavad Gītā, addressed by

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56. Protap C. Ray and K. M. Ganguly (trs.), The Mahābhārata of Krishna-Dwaipayana, Calcutta: Oriental Publishing Co., 2nd ed., 1952-1962, Śāntiparva, ch. 18.



Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna, the hero of the Mahābhārata, not to relinquish the duties of his martial rank, nor to find an escape in a life of renunciation, but to engage manfully in the task of fighting a righteous war. But the call upon Arjuna was not made by a commander in a battle field, but by a spiritual counselor, and according to the Gītā, by a person Divine, who was urging him not to indulge in an act of self-aggrandizement, but to participate in that cosmic phenomenon with the humility of a saint who had resigned himself to the superior will of a Divine Principle.

### Śramaṇa and Brāhmaṇical Modifications

The Gītā sought to resolve the age-old dilemma of action (karma) and renunciation (sannyāsa), produced by the mutually conflicting philosophies of the brāhmaṇas and the śramaṇas, through a new synthesis called the karma-yoga (disinterested action), a Hindu 'Middle Path' as it were, which steered clear of the excesses of both. The Gītā, despite its brāhmaṇical origin, comes out rather vehemently against the professional priests, the traditional supporters of action. It calls these mere reciters of the Vedas, men 'who are robbed of insight by that (speech), ' the 'undiscerning men [who] utter, who take delight in the words of the Veda...saying that there is nothing else, ' men 'whose nature is desire, who are intent on heaven, ' and whose actions are 'replete with various (ritual) acts aiming at the goal of enjoyment and power, ' yielding rebirth only as its fruit.<sup>57</sup> But the 'salvationist', who followed the other extreme was equally 'deluded':

Not by not starting actions  
Does a man attain actionlessness,  
And not by renunciation alone  
Does he go to perfection.

For no one even for a moment  
Remains at all without performing actions;  
For he is made to perform action willy-nilly,  
Every one is, by the Strands that spring from material nature.

Restraining the action-senses  
Who sits pondering with his thought-organ  
On the objects of sense, with deluded soul,  
He is called a hypocrite.<sup>58</sup>

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57. Franklin Edgerton (tr.), Bhagavad Gītā, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1944, vol. I, II, 42-44.

58. Ibid., III, 5-6.

Neither 'action' nor 'renunciation', but 'disinterested action' is what the Gītā prescribes for salvation:

But whoso the senses with the thought-organ  
Controlling, O Arjuna, undertakes  
Discipline of action with the action-senses,  
Unattached (to the fruits of action), he is superior.  
Perform thou action that is (religiously) required;  
For action is better than inaction.<sup>59</sup>

In advocating 'disinterested action', the Gītā had achieved a major objective of the brāhmaṇical revival, viz., the consolidation of the āśrama and varṇa discipline. It had categorically rejected the path of mendicancy as practiced by the śramaṇas, and had at the same time devised a way of achieving salvation through the very duties of one's social position, not through relinquishing these duties. The śramaṇa path, the argument ran, was impracticable because a state of complete inactivity was inconceivable, and was also irrelevant, since it was desire (kāma) and not action (karma--performance of socially-prescribed duties) itself that stood in the way of salvation. As the latter did not depend on any particular mode of action, such as a brāhmaṇ's or a śūdra's, but solely on the elimination of desire, a change in one's actions or profession was completely unwarranted, and might even be considered harmful to oneself as well as society.

The new theory that all ranks (varṇas) were equal in the path of salvation was certainly a most revolutionary one, and might reasonably be attributed to the impact of the śramaṇa movements, particularly of the Buddha. But while it granted this equality, the Gītā did not fail to emphasize that the duties of one's varṇa were obligatory and were not at the disposal of human will. The duties of each individual were defined by the lawbooks according to his rank (varṇa), which was determined on the basis of his inherent nature (prakṛti) by the Creator Himself.<sup>60</sup> The Lord had set the wheel of Creation in motion by apportioning the duties of all men, and also those of the gods, and it was the bounden duty of all to keep the wheel turning.<sup>61</sup> Performance of the duties of one's own rank, when undertaken with disinterestedness, was itself an act of worship, and thus rendered a man worthy of the Lord's grace which alone released him from the cycles of transmigration.

To a society that could neither comprehend the impersonal Absolute of the Upaniṣads, nor bear the call of the śramaṇas for renunciation, a promise of salvation not only to brāhmaṇs and kṣatriyas, but also to 'women, vaiśyas and śūdras', by a

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59. Ibid., III, 7-8.

60. Ibid., IV, 13.

61. Ibid., III, 16.

simple method of devotion to a personal Deity must have come as a great relief, further stabilizing the duties of rank and grhasthāśrama. The śramaṇa orders had human beings as their founders who claimed omniscience and, being atheists, could become the centre of cults that excluded all other gods and saints. By contrast, brāhmaṇical thought was fundamentally theist, yet the Vedic pantheon had fallen into disuse, the individuality of the gods was lost in the panoply of ever more elaborate sacrifice and in the abstractions of Upaniṣadic metaphysical thought. The priesthood could scarcely usurp the divine status of the gods they were bound to serve, especially since their hereditary social position was being undermined by the rising śramaṇas.

In adopting Kṛṣṇa, the deity of a popular and local cult, orthodox brāhmaṇism was clearly fulfilling a need for a personal God and Saviour. Brāhmaṇs declared him to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu (an exalted deity of the Vedic hymns, in the Brāhmaṇa literature the highest personification of the sacrifice) and attributed to him identity with the Upaniṣadic Absolute.<sup>62</sup> The device of assimilation by which, during the Vedic period, all gods were identified with the great god Prajāpati, was once more applied, this time on a far wider scale, to absorb all Vedic and non-Vedic cults and deities, into a single cult of Viṣṇu personified on earth as Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the Gītā. Probably at the same time or even earlier, the other great non-Vedic deity Śiva, together with the cult of linga-worship associated with him, was identified with the Vedic god Rudra and accepted into brāhmaṇism. In its struggle for survival, orthodox brāhmaṇism had revised old theories, had adapted itself to meet the challenge of the śramaṇas, and, in the process of this transformation, had entered a new world, the world of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva Hinduism.

It was not long before Buddhism too was subjected to a similar transformation. Despite its anti-theistic dogma, shared by many other śramaṇa schools, early Buddhism had all the ingredients of a theistic cult. Unlike the Jains who made no distinction between a Tīrthaṅkara and an ordinary Arhant (one who had attained liberation) as far as the attainment of omniscience was concerned, the Buddhists had set different standards of perfection for a Buddha and his Arhant disciples. The Buddha, in addition to being an Arhant, was also omniscient, a distinction denied to an ordinary Arhant. He was believed to have been endowed with marks of divinity, such as the thirty-two marks of a mahāpuruṣa (a Great Being) and was entitled to be called a bhagavat, an appellation normally reserved for divinities like Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa.

This distinction does not seem to have mattered during the life-time of the Buddha, but it soon developed a doctrine of two bodhis (enlightenments), that of the Buddha, superior and perfect, and that of the Arhants, inferior and limited. In the subsequent

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62. See Franklin Edgerton (tr.), Bhagavad Gītā, vol. 2, ch. 4.

period, towards the beginning of the Christian era, it led to the emergence of two rival schools, respectively called Mahāyāna (the Great Vehicle) and Hīnayāna (the Little Vehicle). The latter was a derogatory title given by the Mahāyānists to the schools of the Arhants (one of these called the Theravāda--the school of the elders--survives now in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia) for their 'egotistic' and 'selfish' search after their own salvation (Nirvāṇa) devoid of the full glories of the Buddhahood. The protagonists of the Mahāyāna even doubted the spiritual status of the Arhants and challenged their claim to Nirvāṇa. The belief of the Arhants that they had brought an end to the cycle of transmigration was erroneous, since they had yet to attain omniscience, without which the task of an aspirant was incomplete. The Mahāyānists did not deny the fact that the path of the Arhant was also preached by the Buddha; but they maintained that it was not final, and that the Buddha had preached it as a means (upāya) of preparing those of low aspiration for a higher purpose; it must be discarded in favor of Mahāyāna, the path of the Buddha.

The path of the Buddha was however a long one, not to be completed within a few years or even within a lifetime. According to this new Buddhology, Gautama, in the distant past, in the presence of Dīpaṅkara, a mythical Buddha of 'incalculable aeons' ago, had resolved to be a saviour and had deliberately chosen the career of a Bodhisattva (an aspirant Buddha). With his boundless compassion for the suffering world, he had then spent 'countless' births cultivating such 'perfections' (pāramitās) as charity, morality, forbearance, energy, meditation, and above all, the 'perfection of wisdom' (prajñā-pāramitā), by virtue of which he had in his last birth, as Gautama, attained to omniscience and had set the 'wheel of law' moving. The Theravādins and others of the older school condemned the doubts about Arhant's status as a heresy but welcomed wholeheartedly the greatness now accorded to their Master. They accepted a large number of mythical Buddhas under whose guidance Gautama pursued his career of a Bodhisattva. They even produced a massive literature consisting of hundreds of edifying stories (Jātakas and avadānas) illustrating his heroic and noble deeds. But the orthodox Buddhists were not to succeed in preventing this myth from developing further in a theistic direction. The Mahāyānists or their fore-runners the Mahāsāṅghikas were convinced that the Buddhas belonged to a different order of beings altogether; they were not human beings but were descendents of a spiritual lineage (Buddha-vamśa), who, although perfect, roamed the earth out of compassion. The Mahāvastu, a sacred text of the Lokottaravādin (Transcendentalist) Buddhists, declares the Buddha to be a transcendental being voluntarily subjecting himself to repeated births in order to save the suffering world of gods and men:

The Buddhas conform to the world's condition, but in such a way that they also conform to the traits of transcendentalism.

Although the Buddhas' body is not due to the sexual union of parents, yet the Buddhas can point to their fathers and mothers. This is mere conformity with the world.

From Dīpaṅkara onwards, the Tathāgata is always free from



passions. Yet (the Buddha) has a son, Rāhula, to show. This is mere conformity with the world.<sup>63</sup>

The theme was carried to its logical conclusion when Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, a fully-fledged Mahāyāna text, declared categorically that even the Nirvāṇa (i.e. the death) of Gautama at the end of his cycle of transmigration was not real but only an enactment staged by him as a means (upāya) of preaching the Law.<sup>64</sup> Even the multiplicity of the Buddhas was no more than a device, since in reality there was but only one undifferentiated principle, called the Dharmakāya, the Śūnya (the Void) or the Ineffable about which Gautama had refused to formulate any theories. This Dharmakāya manifested itself from time to time in a spontaneous manner, assuming different names such as a Dīpaṅkara or a Gautama, and it would continue to do so at all times in future. This Dharmakāya, the principle corresponding to the Upaniṣadic Absolute, was the real nature of the Buddhas, as well as of the Bodhisattvas, and indeed of all beings.

In treating the various Buddhas as emanations of a transcendental principle, the Mahāyānists had clearly accepted the doctrine of avatāra (human incarnation of the Deity) so successfully applied by the Vaiṣṇavites in propagating their new cults. As in the case of Kṛṣṇa, the Buddhists too devised two bodies (apart from the Dharmakāya) for the Buddhas, a resplendent one (sambhogakāya) which was manifest only to the Bodhisattvas, and a human body (nirmāṇakāya) which the Buddhas could assume at their will to lead such life as Gautama did 'in conformity with the world'. The Buddhists had been pioneers in the art of temple sculpture even from the time of the Sātavāhaṅgs (1st century B.C. - 3rd century A.D.) in the southeast and the Greco-Bactrian, Śaka, and Kuṣāṇa kings (2nd century B.C. - 3rd century A.D.) of the northwest. Now during the Gupta period (320 - 550 A.D.) they derived fresh inspiration from the developing theory of the three bodies of the Buddha. The new Buddha in his various aspects as Brilliant (Vairocana), Imperturbable (Akṣobhya), Boundless Light (Amitābha) and Infallible Success (Amoghasiddhi) came to be worshipped as the dispenser of grace who would attend to the call of the devotees in the same way as the Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā. There was however one basic difference between these two gods. The God of the Gītā was a human incarnation of a Deity (Viṣṇu) who was the Creator, and the dispenser of justice. In the Buddhist dogma, even in Mahāyāna, there was no provision for such a Deity. The Buddhists relegated the functions of creation to the principle of karma and invested the Buddhas with only the power of dispensing grace.

The Hindu revivalists, particularly the Vaisnavites, who could neither ignore the popularity of the new God nor impose upon his followers the traditional disciplines of brāhmaṇism, found a new way of assimilating the Buddha - by declaring him one more incarnation (avatāra) of Viṣṇu in addition to Kṛṣṇa. The Buddha's preachings against

63. John J. Jones (tr.), *The Mahāvastu*, London: Luzac, 1949, I, 132-134.

64. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, XV, 3-14.



the Vedic institution of sacrifice and the disciplines of varṇa and āśrama, they maintained, had a divine purpose: the preaching was intended for evil beings (Asuras) who would cease to offer the sacrifices and as a consequence would be consigned to hell!<sup>65</sup> At a later date, a more generous role was assigned to this new avatāra by Jayadeva, the great Vaiṣṇava poet of Bengal, in his Gīta Govinda:

You blame the multitude of Vedic texts of the sacrificial ritual which you showed involved the slaughter of animals, O Keśava (Viṣṇu) of pitying heart, bearing the form of Buddha. Hail Hari, Lord of the world.<sup>66</sup>

This new move towards assimilation is unlikely to have had any effect on the informed Buddhists, particularly the monks, but might have helped the Vaiṣṇavites in winning over the Buddhist laity. The Buddhist monks, unlike the Jains, were traditionally indifferent to their laity. They had neither cared to legislate the duties of different ranks, nor offered alternative ceremonies in the place of the traditional domestic rituals. A Buddhist layman might worship the Buddhas and support the monks with food and shelter, yet he was dependent on the brāhmaṇ priests for ceremonies at birth, marriage and death, and was guided by them according to the lawbooks of Manu.

Now with the adoption of the Buddha as an avatāra of Viṣṇu, a way was open even for introducing the brāhmaṇ priests to officiate at the Buddhist temples. In course of time these temples, often rich and generously endowed, as in the case of the Jagannāth-Puri temple in Orissa,<sup>67</sup> the Kadri vihāra in South India, and (until they were handed back to Buddhists from Ceylon by the British Government) even the Buddha-Gayā and the Sārnāth temples passed into the hands of the brāhmaṇ priests and were converted into Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva temples.

The Order of Buddhist monks, weakened by factionalism and interminable doctrinal disputes, had become isolated in the monasteries but continued to wage a relentless war against the orthodox brāhmaṇical systems through its eminent logicians in the University of Nālandā. They even prevailed upon Śaṅkara, founder of the Advaita Vedānta system and also foremost among the revivalist Hindu ācāryas, to accept the Buddhist theory of Illusionism (Māyāvāda). As a consequence, Śaṅkara was condemned by the later theologians as a crypto-Buddhist. Buddhist influence can also be seen in Śaṅkara's pioneering effort in organizing the brāhmaṇical order

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65. Mahābhārata, XII, 46, 107; Matsyapurāṇa, 47, 247.

66. Gīta Govinda, I, 1, 9.

67. R. C. Mitra, The Decline of Buddhism, Viśvabhāratī: Santiniketan, 1954, p. 99.

of young sannyāsins (ascetics), that admitted candidates directly from student life (brahmacaryāśrama) without going through the stage of a householder, and in the establishment of several monasteries (pīṭha) all over India, presided over by abbots with spiritual powers over large parishes. These were largely instrumental in rehabilitating the orthodox system on the basis of new theistic cults and in holding the society together in medieval times against the onslaught of Islam in the North. But it would be an exaggeration to credit Śaṅkara and his apostles, as is often done by a section of Hindus, with the feat of total extermination of Buddhism in India.

The decline of Buddhism had set in long before with the rise of Mahāyāna and the consequent loss of fervor for the monastic system. Even during the time of its founder, Buddhism was not free from heresies, and in subsequent periods it was torn with intersectarian disputes at a time when the theistic cults of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism were vigorously moving towards a greater unity. The Buddhist laity--a small minority compared with the Hindu population--had lost its separate identity, and had even seen its own God taken over by a people who had never believed in him and were soon to discard him as an alien. As for the monks, thanks to the Master's call for moderation they had long since abandoned the rigors of asceticism. Patronized by powerful kings and wealthy merchants, their monasteries had amassed large estates where the new śramaṇas freely abandoned themselves to the mysticism of Mahāyāna and adopted the Tāntric practices then prevalent among the cults of Nāthas and Siddhas belonging to the Śaiva religion. In Bengal and Bihar Buddhism lingered on in this state of decay and corruption until the twelfth century, when marauding armies of Muslim fanatics sacked the monasteries, burned their libraries, and caused the few monks who survived to escape into Nepal and Tibet.

Jainism would have met with a similar fate had it relaxed its discipline for the monks and laity or allowed any major departure from its basic dogmas of anekānta and atheism. Early in their history the Jains had migrated towards the West (Rajasthan and Gujarat) and the South where they had established themselves in the courts of the Cālukya and Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings and were counted among the prosperous communities of the upper middle class. There they concentrated on the propagation of their cherished doctrines of ahimsā, condemned the animal sacrifices that had by now fallen into disuse, and preached the virtues of a vegetarian diet.

The Jains' opposition to theism was not in the least diminished, but they fought off the mounting opposition of the apostles of the Vaiṣṇava faith by adopting Rāma, one of the avatāras of Viṣṇu, as a Jain saint and produced, in the vernaculars of the South, Jain versions of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. Although they thus adopted all the heroes of ancient brāhmaṇism, they did not accept their divinity, and in strict accordance with their doctrine of ahimsā they even had Kṛṣṇa sent to purgatory for having instigated Arjuna to fight the Great War.

But the doctrine of karma-yoga had come to stay, the discipline of social rank

was in force as never before, and the Jains, especially the Digambaras in the South, could only preach against it at the cost of their survival. It would have been suicidal to accept the brāhmaṇical lawbooks for this purpose or to let the brāhmaṇs dictate to the Jain laymen how they should perform their social duties and observe the rites prescribed for each rank. The Jain monks saw to this need for fresh legislation, and Jinasena (8th century A.D.) among others produced Jain lawbooks in the guise of Purāṇas glorifying the lives of the Jain Tīrthaṅkaras. They declared that the system of varṇas (ranks) was not of brāhmaṇical origin but was promulgated by the first of the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras, Vṛṣabha, at the beginning of the present kalpa (cosmic cycle).<sup>68</sup> Vṛṣabha had also prescribed Jain rites complete with litany appropriate on the occasions of birth, marriage and death. To give full effect to this theory, the Jains even instituted a special hereditary class of lay priests, called Jain-brāhmaṇs, entrusted with the duty of conducting services at the Jain temples and ceremonial rites in the homes of Jain laymen. These neo-brāhmaṇs were of course not to be raised to the status of their equivalents in the brāhmaṇical system. The Jains still adhered to their notion of the supremacy of kṣatriyas and maintained that Tīrthaṅkaras, like Mahāvīra himself, came only from the ranks of the kṣatriya. But the majority of Jains were merchants and petty landlords by profession and continued to claim for themselves the rank of vaiśya. The menial workers and any who engaged in activities involving hiṃsā (tilling, etc.) seem to have qualified for the rank of śūdra, since the name Caturtha ('fourth') is applied to a certain section of the Jain farmers in the Deccan today. Thus, in their struggle to achieve ranked status without endangering their survival as a separate group within the community, the Jains had come to accept the outward forms of brāhmaṇical orthodoxy and had as a result produced a society parallel to it.

This, however, was hardly a basis for a lasting peace between the two 'natural enemies'. Rank (varṇa) according to the brāhmaṇs was not a matter of choice; rather like sex, one was born with it, it could not be acquired. The institution of a category of brāhmaṇs was the prerogative of a Vedic God and could not be left to a handful of unrepentant atheists. The struggle between the Jains and the theists continued unabated for several hundred years, until about the twelfth century. Then the Digambara Jains, in the South, were overpowered by the Vaiṣṇavas led by Rāmānuja, the great founder of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school, and by the Vīrāṣaivas (Līṅgāyats) under the leadership of Basava, the founder of the reformed Śaiva sect. They were driven from the seats of power, and, in a state of undeclared peace, lived humble lives within their own small communities.

In the West however the Śvetāmbara Jains found their great champion in ācārya Hemacandra, who was influential in the conversion of Kumārapāla, the Śaivite king of Gujaraṭ, to Jainism. An outstanding and prolific writer, Hemacandra

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68. Pannalal Jain (tr.), Mahāpurāṇa, Benaras: Bharatiya Jnanapitha, 1951, I, ch. 16.

inaugurated a new era in the history of the Jains. With their austere ascetic outlook, they had hitherto, like their fellow śramaṇas the Buddhists, confined their literary interests to their scriptures and to works of literature in the fields of logic and philosophy. With the voluntary acceptance of brāhmaṇical institutions and mythology, albeit in a modified form and having already begun to compose their own religious epics and Purāṇas, the Jains were ready to cast off their inhibitions and now enthusiastically invaded the secular fields so far dominated by the brāhmaṇs. Hemacandra not only wrote voluminously on Jain doctrine but was equally at home in the secular sciences of polity, logic, philology, grammar, lexicography and rhetoric and earned for himself the title of polymath of the modern world (kali-kāla-sarvajña). The Jain monasteries became veritable storehouses of rare manuscripts not only of Jainism but also of all other religions covering almost all branches of learning. The scope of their libraries and of their scholastic study, in marked contrast to the attitudes of Buddhists and Hindus alike, not only gave them a scholarly advantage but also contributed towards a closer relationship between the śramaṇa communities and brāhmaṇical society.

After nearly two millennia of vigorous, and in many ways successful, struggle against the orthodox brāhmaṇical religion and social hierarchy, now, with Jainism held in check and Buddhism neutralised even to the point of complete effacement, the śramaṇa tradition had reached a low ebb. The śramaṇas, who had sought salvation through atheism with a consistency unique in world history, were henceforth left to pursue a solitary path on the periphery of Indian society. Brāhmaṇism had yielded its position on ritual and, to some extent, on hereditary rank when faced with a vigorous and articulate śramaṇa movement. But now, when the forces of Islam threatened the nation, it was the orthodox theism (of the Gītā) that seemed to offer a rallying point for the vast majority against the onslaught of an alien culture. It is within the great theistic movements of Hindu poets and mystics, from Caitanya to Kabīr, that the on-going vestiges of an effective and articulate śramaṇa tradition are to be sought.



## CHAPTER III

### PILGRIMAGE SITES AND INDIAN CIVILIZATION

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## PILGRIMAGE SITES AND INDIAN CIVILIZATION

Agehananda Bharati

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## PILGRIMAGE SITES AND INDIAN CIVILIZATION

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### 1. The Development of Pilgrimage as Process and Institution

In Indian traditions, it is important not to use English descriptive terms for Indian themes just because the contextual ranges seem to overlap. When we talk about 'pilgrimage' we are no doubt entitled to assume some parallels in the Christian or in the Muslim traditions, but we must not expect that the philosophy, ideology, or even the implementation of those deeds and attitudes that constitute 'pilgrimage' will coincide with Mediterranean notions referred to by the same terms. What is common to all pilgrimage anywhere is the hope for and the belief in some sort of merit, some sort of achievement which cannot be attained by other means; but even the statement that all pilgrimage entails physical movement, travel, circumambulation, etc., which sounds like a tautology, has to be modified, as Indian terms for pilgrimage are often to be understood metaphorically, as when a yogi (a contemplative adept) 'performs' a 'pilgrimage' (yātrā) to the seven 'shrines' (tīrtha) by a specific type of meditation, during which he stays put, physically.

We do not read anything about pilgrimage even in the widest sense, in the early canonical scripture, the Vedas, and we read very little in the Upaniṣads. The Buddhist texts report that the emperor Aśoka in the third century B.C. substituted pilgrimages to Buddhist sites for the traditional royal hunting expeditions, and during the following centuries it is quite possible that such pilgrimages continued to be performed by Buddhist monks and laymen. In the Purāṇas and the Epics one finds ample mention of pilgrimages, as though people at the time of the composition and compilation of the Purāṇas and the two Epics (roughly 300 B.C. to 1000 A.D.) took pilgrimage with all its complications and ramifications for granted.

The first historical documents on pilgrimage are the writings of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, Fa-hsien, Sung Yun, Hwei-Sang, and Hsüan Tsang.<sup>1</sup> These men were not primarily interested in describing the Indian scene, yet a lot about it--culturally, politically, and geographically--can be inferred from their invaluable writings. Their chief concern was to give faithful accounts of their pilgrimages to the Buddhist places of merit such as Isipatanā (Sārnāth near Varāṇasī), Gayā, and

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1. See Herbert A. Giles, The Travels of Fa-hsien, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956; also Thomas Watters, On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1904-5, 2 vols.

Rājagṛha (Rajgir, Bihar). By reading their accounts, we learn much about the way pilgrims acted and must have acted for a long time previous to the travels of the Chinese monks starting around the 5th century AD.

The traditional attitude toward pilgrimage has not changed very much up to this day, and certainly the rationale for undertaking or otherwise sponsoring pilgrimages has remained identical since very old times. Varying from the Islamic doctrine that each Muslim, if possible, should make the Ḥajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) at least once in a lifetime, the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain notion, i.e., that of the indigenous Indian religions, is that actual physical pilgrimage is supererogatory. Although merit may be gained by a trip to Banāras or Sāmāth, one does not have to undertake a pilgrimage to achieve the supreme goals set by the three autochthonous religions: mukti or liberation for brāhmaṇs, Hindus, and Jains; and nirvāṇa for Buddhists. Essentially, these mean cessation of rebirth and hence re-death. These can be attained anywhere, and pilgrimage is no more conducive to their achievement than any other meritorious act. Strictly speaking, pilgrimage does not really help at all. Contemplation achieves redemption or, according to some devotional schools such as the medieval bhakti-schools of Bengal and South India, redemption is a boon granted by divine grace.<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt, however, that pilgrimage has had its backing, on the canonical side, for the purpose of achieving targets which, though not strictly 'mundane,' are at best intermediary in the redemptive career of the individual. The Purāṇas contain passages extolling the merit of pilgrimages in a general way, and so do the Epics and some of the later, partly apocryphal Upaniṣads. 'Traveling to pilgrim places' (tīrthayātrā) is listed among the religious deeds a person should perform; the form of these recommendations is roughly, 'he who worships the gods, serves his parents, respects teachers and brāhmaṇs, does charity, controls his senses, visits shrines and other places of pilgrimage...etc., will gain the highest goal' (paramadhāma, that might be loosely translated as 'heaven' provided this term is understood without the moralistic-eternalistic overtones of the Christian tradition). Pilgrimage is thus one -- and only one -- of the many types of spiritually beneficial and meritorious deeds.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa,<sup>3</sup> the latest and the most popular of the Purāṇas, contains well over a hundred eulogies of holy rivers, tanks, temples, forests, and other sacred sites. Each of these descriptions is followed by a statement technically termed phalaśruti (literally 'revealing the fruit') listing the merits that accrue through following the directives properly. Phalaśruti is a very ancient canonical device (the Veda-saṃhitā and the Upaniṣads list phalaśruti at the end of virtually each section). The classical form is, 'he who does...properly, according to the preceding injunctions

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2. See Milton B. Singer (ed.), Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes, Honolulu: East West Center Press, 1966, particularly T.K. Venkatesvaran's chapter.

3. Ibid., chs. 1, 2, 3.



...will gain x, y, z' -- and usually, the phala ('fruit, result') is specified in great detail.

We must therefore regard the process of phalaśruti as quite basic in the history of pilgrimage in India. People tend to exert themselves more readily for a highly specified, highly desired result than for more general, unspecified goals. The written and oral touting tradition of the innumerable shrines of India has contributed in a large measure to the diffuse growth of pilgrimage over the centuries. We shall see that the all-India sites like Gayā, Varāṇasī and Prayāg, promise more general, more esoteric, and more salvational results than the small shrines of local or regional importance. This ties in neatly with the helpful Great Tradition-Little Tradition dichotomy used by modern cultural anthropologists in their analysis of culture areas with highly divergent manifestations of cultural themes.<sup>4</sup> Though phalaśruti was originally a scriptural, Great Tradition notion, it is understood as an underlying theme even in those thousands of localized cults which have very little ostentative connection with the learned concept. Varāṇasī, Hardrār, Puri, and Prayāg give salvation to those who worship and bathe there; there is scriptural support couched in phalaśruti parlance. But at some village shrine, not larger than a beach cabin, containing a crude image of the goddess Śitalā, whose priest knows no Sanskrit, who is not familiar with the term phalaśruti, and who is probably illiterate even in his own vernacular, village folks know exactly what gifts to make to the goddess on what days, and what to expect for these gifts -- or for the omission of the usual observances. The goddess Śitalā protects men from smallpox and cattle from rinderpest: if you bring a coconut and two plantains and deposit them, or have the priest deposit them, this will render a prophylaxis for the year; or, if there has been an affliction, more gifts of a specific kind will be required for a therapy. The knowledge of the when, how much, and how, and of the results that follow is the Little Tradition version of the Vedic and other scriptural pattern known as phalaśruti to the brāhmaṇs and the other spokesmen of the Great Tradition.

Much in Indian culture can be explained in terms of patron-client relation and interaction. We have seen that the client -- the worshiper, the propitiating man or woman -- relies axiomatically on a give-and-take situation that his elders have formulated for him. What about the patron -- the god of the shrine, the deity presiding over a famous pilgrim site, the holy man (as we shall presently see), or the religiously charismatic? Their favor has to be sought with care. The manner in which it is sought and understood when it has descended is uniquely Indian and involves a concept

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4. See M. N. Srinivas, Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952. Also, "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization" by McKim Marriott, in McKim Marriott (ed.), Village India: Studies in the Little Community, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955.

that has no parallel in any other culture. This is the complex notion of darśana (Sanskrit; we shall use the better-known, slightly shortened North Indian vernacular form, darśan). The etymology of darśan derives from the root dr̥ṣ-- 'to see'. Literally, darśan means 'sight' -- 'auspicious sight'. But darśan as a universal religious institution requires special attention.

## II. Darśan and Prasād: Charismatic Agents in the Indian Tradition

More than at the nationally known sites of pilgrimage, the local or regional shrines provide an important clue for the understanding of the darśan-complex. The attitude of the worshiper at the Viṣṇu shrine at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh is one of personal affection and awe; something more intensive and pervasive than the phenomena circumscribed as the numinous by Rudolf Otto.<sup>5</sup> The devotees of Śrī Veṅkaṭeśvara -- the epithet of Lord Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa at that most important Vaiṣṇava shrine in South India -- do not just come to worship and go. They come to Him with their personal problems and woes. If a wife is thought to be barren, her husband takes her there to make an offering and to ask Veṅkaṭeśvara for offspring. When medical help has failed, a man will go to Tirupati as a final resort. And at least one renowned politician did the pilgrimage and, no doubt, the necessary ritual, at the place before general election day. But far beyond that, pious Hindus who feel that they want to 'renounce' the world, i.e., that they have reached a stage where worldly desires are on the wane and they want to turn full time to 'spiritual life', would conduct the pilgrimage and declare their intention to the God and ask for his blessing and his darśan. Personal deities at a large number of shrines are approached and propitiated in similar fashion; and though hardly any shrine equals Tirupati in this respect, devotees of Śiva in Northeastern India would go to Deogarh to have darśan of Baijnath (see below) just as North Indian worshipers of Kṛṣṇa would go to Bāṅke Bihārī at Brindāvan, Bengali and Śākta worshipers of the goddess would repair to the Kālī Ghāṭ shrine that gave the city of Calcutta its name.

Now if we substitute for the deity the name of any 'saint' (this in its various vernacular forms is a professional term, and one in such a position, be he a sannyāsī or a sādhu of any sort, may well introduce himself as a 'saint') and if we apply all the divine epithets and the devotees' attitudes to such a person, there will be no subjective difference in the apperception of these two sacred entities, however different they may seem to the non-Hindu. In other words, the personal deity and the established religious charismatic qualities merge into a single person, or perhaps more precisely, into a single concept instantiated differentially in the religious leader (sādhu, sannyāsī, avatāra, etc.) and in the deity presiding over a shrine or a place of pilgrimage.

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5. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, New York: Oxford University Press, 1952.

It is significant that the word *fīrtha* (literally 'ford' or 'crossing') means a shrine, a holy place, or any center of pilgrimage, as well as a saintly person or a religious figure as in the passage that says, 'whoever else was born comparable to that holy man, that *fīrtha*.'<sup>6</sup> In modern parlance, whenever a *sādhu* or another institutionalized holy man is introduced to an audience, one of the epithets is bound to be '*fīrtha*.' The metaphorical analysis of 'holy place,' i.e., that the person is like a place of pilgrimage to which pilgrims converge, is simply incorrect. Oral elicitations of phrases using the term show that *fīrtha* actually means 'a holy man,' just as much as it means 'a holy place' or 'lustral water.' In Dravidian Great Tradition parlance, *fīrtham* means 'water,' particularly the water used for the *ācamanam*, i.e., the libation and sipping previous to any meal.

It is quite difficult to extricate eulogistic reference in the Indian languages from categorical ascriptions in religious-ritualistic discourse. There seems to be a sort of guided transition from sheer panegyry to characterization taken literally. Thus the hosts of a mendicant *sādhu* or other 'saint' would speak of him as a *mahātman* ('great soul') or a *mūrti* ('religious icon, idol'). The inter-monastic cross-reference is always by the term *mūrti*, as when the mahant (abbot) of an *āśram* asks his *sevak* (assistant), 'How many *mūrtis* will be fed at the *bhaṇḍārā* (feast given to the 'saints' by some wealthy, merit-seeking patron)?'

As the contact between the charismatic figure and his *bhaktas* (devotees) becomes closer and more pervasive, the epithets become more highly Sanskritic. He will be called *kṛpāsindhu* ('ocean of mercy'), *bhagavān* ('Lord'), etc. This is so much part of the ascription pattern that the objective distinction between two such seemingly disparate entities as the deity presiding over a shrine, its icon, and the itinerant monk or any other guru-type spiritual preceptor, lapses quite systematically. Part of the process of intuiting the complex interaction between the guru and his 'disciple' (*śiṣya* in Sanskrit, *celā* in Hindi) is precisely the cognitive amalgamation between the deity and the person who somehow manifests it. The formal and mythological vindication for this attitude is quite readily stated, and it will be given to the enquirer by any Hindu who is involved in the guru-*śiṣya* situation in either the giving or the receiving end. Divinity incarnates itself in theriomorphic or anthropomorphic form. The ten *avatāras* of Viṣṇu represent progressive phylogenesis: beginning with aquatic forms, proceeding through amphibian to vertebrate form, through Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, concluding with the apocalyptic theo-anthropomorphic Kalkin who has yet to come. These are standard mythology. In principle and in fact, every true guru is a partial, or a complete manifestation of divinity. There is little logic in the mythological corroboration pursuit: both Mahatma Gandhi and Anukūl Thākur, a 'householder' (i.e., married, non-monastic) saint in Bengal were occasionally referred to

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6. Uttararāmacaritra 1; Manusmṛti 3, 136; Hitopadeśa 2, 8; Raghuvamśa 5, 15; and many other passages.

as avatāras (incarnations) of Kṛṣṇa. The fact that Kṛṣṇa himself is an avatāra of Viṣṇu did not particularly concern the devotees,<sup>7</sup> all of whom knew this basic piece of mythology. When they speak English, sādhus refer to themselves as 'saints' in a matter-of-fact way; when using a North Indian vernacular, the term is 'sant.' No one seems surprised at such an introduction. This gives a new twist to Max Weber's notion of the charismatic: in Hindu India, the charismatic individual is institutionalized by consent, without writ, without even the consensus of a theological elite. 'Only Siva can say if a man who wears the robe is a genuine saint or a fake.'<sup>8</sup> And although laymen and sādhus frequently call their colleagues frauds or worse,<sup>8</sup> these charges have never really succeeded in changing the Hindus' overall view of the robe-wearing man as a holy man, a charismatic figure who has no duty toward people except giving them darśan. Nor have the numerous denunciations of the sādhus and their institutions handed down by the leaders of modern India had a noticeable effect. At the places of pilgrimage, in the holy cities, and at the kumbha mela (see below) the sādhu rules supreme, and nobody denies his status.

This unique status of the religious charismatic person<sup>9</sup> in India also accounts for the rules of demeanor encountered at temples, shrines, bathing places, and other sites of worship. Basically, there are only two mutually exclusive types of behavior and observance at places of pilgrimage and at other Hindu shrines. Let us not forget that every shrine is a centre of pilgrimage for some, and that there are few if any shrines (except village shrines and shrines in some royal households) accessible to the public which would not be visited by pilgrims from outside the locality. The procedural differentiation is not, as superficial accounts have suggested, between male and female pilgrims. The pilgrims' deeds are largely shared by men and women, though they do not complete observances together. Some specifically 'male' acts, like the ācamanam or rinsing of the mouth with water, and the tarpanam, the libation of water into water, are done by high-caste men only. But at least one modern sect permits and exhorts women to share in these rituals, and one might assume that differences are being blurred.

The radical demarcation in behavior and observances is between lay pilgrims and monk pilgrims, or sādhus. The lay Hindu goes to a shrine to obtain darśan or some benefit. He is a client at the shrine or the bathing place. The sannyāsī and other ordained sādhus are patrons at those places, not clients. This can be derived from what has already been said about the charismatic darśan-complex. The sannyāsī is not an 'ordinary human being,' as pious Hindus may tell you. In some respects he is not even an ordinary god but is above the gods. The gods are married; they are

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7. See Edward C. Dimock, The Lotus of the Hidden Moon, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

8. See Khushwant Singh, "In Quest of India's Holy Men," The New York Times Sunday Magazine, January 8, 1967.

9. See P. Singer, Sadhus and Charisma, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1967.



compared functionally in the sacred complex with householders. The monk has not only renounced family and worldly ties, he has renounced heavens and salvation. If he enters the temple, he blesses the icon; if he prostrates, he is either badly informed or he does so to teach humility. If the temple priest is knowledgeable, he does not treat the sādhu visitor as he treats lay pilgrims. In the first place, the sādhu is not 'alive' in the sense others are from the ritualistic viewpoint. He has undergone the virajā-homa ritual, a symbolic cremation, whereby he ceases to be among the living.<sup>10</sup> But more than that, he has shed his sacred thread; he no longer belongs to any caste, hence he is not a member of Hindu society. Correctly, the priest would beckon the sādhu to step to the left side of the image, and should give him tīrtha (lustral water) and the prasād with his left hand, moving his thumb counter-clockwise; for this is the manner in which oblations and libations are given to the pitris, manes or ancestral spirits. I have witnessed this correct procedure only in temples in the South, particularly in Tamilnad and Kerala, where the priests' training is stricter and more intensive.<sup>11</sup> The head priest (mahant) of the temple Viśvanāth in Varāṇasī (see below), when reminded of this rule, immediately instructed his assistants to watch out for sādhus in the future and perform the ritual correctly.

On the other extreme, there are conventions of a prohibitive sort for women pilgrims. No woman may participate in any ritual including bathing at the sacred site when she has her menstrual periods. At Varāṇasī, Prayāg, Hardvār, and at many other sacred places as well, she is not allowed to take her purificatory bath after the fourth day of her period, in the sacred river. At no time may any person urinate or defecate into a sacred river or pond.

The religious organizations of the Hindu renaissance usually take good care that these basic prohibitions are heeded, in spite of their emphasis on modernization and on attending to spiritual essentials, whatever they may be, rather than on ritualistic details. Thus, the Chinmaya Mission, the organization created by Swami Chinmayananda and his devotees, or the Peace Mission of Swami Omananda at Totapallu in Andhra arrange an annual train-and-bus pilgrimage to distant places for a large number of their followers. In an instruction pamphlet distributed by the latter institution, one section reads: 'special arrangement for bathing and toilet and separateness of food will be made for menstruating ladies.'

The modern monastic institutions have probably been instrumental in breaking down some of the restrictions at central places of pilgrimage. Until quite recently, only 'twice-born' Hindus could visit most of the shrines of national importance.

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10. See A. Bharati, The Ochre Robe, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962.

11. See J.A.B. Van Buitenen's contribution in Milton B. Singer (ed.), op. cit.



But 'modern sādhus' have succeeded in ushering in some of their low-caste devotees. Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center in New York took some of his American disciples into the sanctum of the Jagannāth Temple at Puri, Orissa -- something unthinkable even twenty years ago.

In studying the patron-client syndrome in any culture, we must observe the services or the material instruments that characterize these relations in a regulated fashion. The most striking material corollary of the darśan-complex is the offering and the re-distribution of food through divine or ascriptively divine agency. This pattern centers on prasād, food transferred in the religious situation.

Food is ritualistically relevant in all societies, but in Hindu India it has extraordinary socio-religious significance. Degrees of caste-status and in fact the entire caste hierarchy is definable, even by quantitative methods, in terms of types of food given and taken.<sup>12</sup>

In the formal ritualistic situation and in the processes of pilgrimage, prasād has an even more highly structured function. It derives its importance from the concept of darśan just discussed. As part of the pilgrim's commitments, many kinds of food are presented to the shrine, coconuts, plantains, staples such as grain and rice, milk and milk products, and in low-caste sanctuaries or locations connected with tantric goddess-worship, mutton, chicken, and fish. These are handed to the officiating priest; he offers them to the deity, or the various deities in the shrine, as part of the sacerdotal office. They may then be displayed in front of the deity for any period from ten minutes to several days (in the case of less perishable offerings). But this is not intrinsic to the functioning of prasād; the fact that the offering has been made, with the proper incantations, to the deity means it has been accepted and eaten or 'enjoyed.' The meal for the deity is called bhoga, ('enjoyment, absorbing of food'). The deity's food consists largely, though not exclusively, of those articles brought by the pilgrims or by local visitors. After this, the food is prasād, (literally 'that which is given out by divine favor'), i.e., from the deity to the assembled worshipers. It is then eaten by the latter, or by the priests, or taken away and given to friends or relatives who did not attend the bhoga, or sacrificial feeding rite.

Now we know that the sacred personage, the sādhu or sannyāsī or 'saint,' functions like the deity of the shrine -- hence food 'blessed' by him is prasād. During satsaṅg<sup>13</sup>

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12. See McKim Marriott, Caste Ranking and Community Structure in Five Regions of India and Pakistan, Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, 1960, Monograph No. 23.

13. The term has acquired a far more general meaning in modern Hindu parlance. Any meeting at private or public places where any religious activity is carried out is now called satsaṅg. Some groups stress its need more than others; for the Sikhs it has canonical status, for their gurus enjoined satsaṅg as the most direct means to spiritual advancement.

('meeting of the good'), pious assemblages for the purpose of conveying and receiving religious instruction and 'chanting the names of the Lord,' i.e., conducting religious litany, articles of food -- most frequently sweets and cut-up fruits -- are presented on a metal tray or on a plantain-leaf to the person in charge. He may be a renowned 'saint,' sādhu or sannyāsī, an itinerant or resident monk, or for that matter any brāhmaṇ, or any pious person who talks religion and who has succeeded in creating an audience for himself. He then 'blesses' it either by murmuring a mantra or any formula of benedictory design, or by touching it with his right hand and/or eating a piece of the offering. Immediately after this, the food is distributed to the audience, for whom it is now prasād, exactly like temple-originated prasād.

Attachment to prasād quite often assumes highly intensified proportions. During the kumbhamelā (see below), when the monks take out their procession, hundreds of pilgrims try to touch them, clasping their legs and massaging them whenever the procession comes to a halt. During the kumbhamela at Prayāg in 1954, the mahants (abbots) and mahāmaṇḍaleśvars (abbots general or senior monks in charge of a cluster of monastic institutions) no longer rode elephants during the procession, but instead sat in slow-moving open cars and sedans provided by Mārwarī merchant-devotees. I witnessed a large number of people, mostly but by no means exclusively women, touch the fenders of the cars to collect the dust from them, which they then applied to their foreheads; banana and orange peelings discarded by the monastic participants were picked up eagerly, to be eaten at once or carried away. All these are prasād in the most impressive and radical sense of the term. Food touched by the religious personage's mouth, or even chewed by him, is said to have enormous spiritual potency. Food that has come into oral contact with any other person is ucciṣṭa ('polluted') and would be consumed only by untouchables.

Food offered to the deity and redistributed to the audience is the most tangible item 'to go' after a visit to any temple or pilgrim site. Prasād from places of all-India or high sectarian importance is cherished and preserved, carried back to the kinsfolk of the pilgrim, sometimes over a thousand miles. Let it be said that prasād is almost never gratis; its price ranges from about twenty dollars at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh (see below) to a few coins deposited by the pilgrim in the shrine itself. Literally millions of coins are thrown every day into the space in front of the Guru Granth Saheb in the large Sikh temple in Amritsar (see below) or handed to the priest during the course of his guiding and supervising activities. Pilgrims increasingly complain, justifiably, about the rising cost of prasād.

In the smṛti-literature and in all Indian vernaculars, there is an idiom meaning 'to make pure,' to make acceptable for ritualistic purposes (pavitr-kr). The actual or legendary presence of a sādhu or an avatāra makes places pure. It makes a center of pilgrimage out of any site. And the touch or the eating of food by a god or a sādhu converts the food, or its remnants, into prasād. In the Hindi prefaces to the bilingual editions of the Purāṇas, we invariably find such statements as 'under the

pretext of wanting to visit holy places, these holy souls actually make those places into what they are.<sup>14</sup>

But for the special treatment of sādhus and other ascriptive religious figures, the ceremonial observances and the ritualistic interaction between the priests and their pilgrim clients follows a fairly well-established pattern throughout India. We shall present some specific ritual at certain places in the final sections. The following observances are followed, with minor variations in style, at all places:

There are preparatory rites of purification at all religious sites. They typically involve one or more baths, and a ritualistically valid bath usually means total immersion. Along with the bath, and as the subsequent rites are performed, the ritualistic fee (dakṣiṇā) is given to the priest-guide in charge of the pilgrim. After the bath, a set number of shrines, tanks, mounds, or other relevant landmarks are visited, and the priest-guide chants the necessary incantations, as the pilgrim stands by in a reverential mood. He does not perform the active incantations himself. Those learned brāhmaṇs or other high-caste pilgrims who know Sanskrit chants may utter them separately while the officiating priest performs the required rite on behalf of his client. The incantations which the occasional scholar among the pilgrims chants have nothing to do with the offering at the shrine. They are more likely meant to be embellishments of the visit or a display of piety and learning rather than part of the ritual.

### III. The Places of Pilgrimage: Organization and Location

Basically, there are two types of occasions which mark the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain pilgrimage. One of them is the fulfillment of a vrata or 'vow'; the other is the darśan-complex already discussed. The latter is more diffuse and less urgent. It is comparable in style and purpose to the orthodox Islamic notions of pilgrimage to Mecca. The Hajj is like a pilgrimage to obtain darśan at the Ka'ba. Vrata, 'vows,' are often highly specific and they usually require a visit to one place only. It is the place where a deity specializes, as it were, in repairing damage, or balancing some need of the pilgrim who seeks remedy. The formulation of the vrata (vow), most generally put, is something like this: 'If I gain x or overcome y or accomplish z, I shall make a pilgrimage to A'; or, 'Because I have not gained x, etc., I shall make a pilgrimage to A in order to gain it, for A is known to specialize in granting x.'

There is almost an inverse correlation between the all-India importance of a temple and its deity, and the degree of its specialization. Whereas Lord Viśvanāth

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14. As in the bilingual Sanskrit and Hindi edition of the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, Gorakhpur: Gītāpress.

at Banaras, or Lord Badrinārāyaṇ at Badrināth bestow such beautiful but rather general favors as salvation and happiness, Balarāma at Irīñjālakuṭa in Kerala blesses barren women to conceive, and Subbramanīa at Perur heals bone diseases. It seems to follow, then, that the darśan-seeking pilgrims will tend to visit places of all-India importance; vrata-making devotees will seek out divine specialists. Yet rigid demarcations are hard to find, and a man or a woman may do both consecutively or even simultaneously.

Pilgrims, then, go to places of worship and propitiation either because they have some religious interest directed toward a specific place, the necessary means, or the need. They may also go because there are times when visiting certain places is particularly meritorious. Such gatherings of pilgrims are called melās in North Indian languages. Holy sites have their melās during a certain part of the year, or once in several years. Invariably, the time for the melā is determined by some astrological-astronomical event. Some planet, or the moon, or the sun has to enter a particular sign of the zodiac; or else there has to be a lunar or solar eclipse. Commemoration of such an event as the birth, death, or the siddhi (attainment of religious consummation) of a particular saint may provide dates for melās. But apart from some very recent episodes, like the site connected with teachers of the modern Hindu renaissance (Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, etc.), these hardly account for more than a small fraction of melās in Hindu India.

By far the most important melās are the kumbhamelās. These have not been studied in any manner commensurate with their significance.<sup>15</sup> It is at the kumbhamelā, and only there, that lay and monastic Hindus interact in a structured manner; that the state of the religious art is confirmed; and that Hindus, Jains, and in former days Buddhists, identify with their religions and their cultural grassroots. 'Kumbha' is an astrological-astronomical term for the sign Aquarius in the zodiac. The kumbhamelās take place every sixth and every twelfth year, as the planet Jupiter or two of the other 'slow' planets enter Aquarius, which happens every twelfth year. This event is called the pūrṇakumbha, 'full entrance.' The sixth-year event is the ardhakumbha, 'half-entrance,' when the planet stands opposite Aquarius. The kumbhamelās take place at three sites: the most important at the Trivenī near Prayāg (Allahabad, U. P., see below); the kumbha next in importance is that at Hardvār on the Upper Ganges in Western U. P.; and the somewhat localized kumbha at Nasik in Gujarat ranks third. The Allahabad kumbhamelā attracts Hindus from all over India; the 1954 kumbhamelā in which this writer participated was visited by 3,000,000 pilgrims, of which roughly 500,000 came from distances of over 500 miles. The Hardvār kumbhamelā attracts mostly Northern Indians and Punjabis. The event at Nāsik is visited largely by Maharashtrians and Gujaratis. The last kumbhamelā

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15. But see G. S. Ghurye, Indian Sadhus, Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1953, and P. Singer, op. cit.



at Hardvār (1959) had 800,000 visitors, at Nāsik (1964) 500,000, and at Allahabad (1966) 4,200,000.

The format of the kumbhamelā is a greatly extended, mass-involving ritual. The pilgrims take their baths, make their offerings, receive religious instruction, and visit the shrines very much in the manner in which they would do these things if they had come alone or in small groups. At the kumbhamelā, these observances are done within the framework of one central event.

The highlight of the kumbhamelā is the procession (jūlūs, yātrā) of the monks and monastic heads. At Prayāg, the various monastic and non-monastic religious institutions and orders (maṭha, akhārā) pitch their tents a few weeks before the main event. The procession must be scheduled for the auspicious moment (muhūrta) of the planet actually entering the sign Aquarius. The monastic and other religious heads (maṇḍalēśvar, mahant) arrive with their retinues consisting of junior monks and a number of novices (brahmacāri). For today's kumbhamelās, they come by train and by air from all parts of India. As they settle in their tents close to the banks of the river, their lay devotees from all parts of India come for darśan. They enter the tents, prostrate themselves before the monks, and receive instruction of a spiritual kind. It is perhaps only at the kumbhamelās that sādhus and laymen feel obliged to talk exclusively about religious subjects; at other places, the monk instructs the laity on all problems, religious and profane.

Wealthier visitors often arrange for a bhaṇḍārā ('open-house treasury'), i.e., a feast for a number of monks and novices, ranging anywhere from half a dozen to three hundred. Many courses of vegetarian food and sweet dishes are provided, and as food is distributed to the monks sitting in the paṅgat (eating line on the ground), they chant Vedic or Upaniṣadic passages in Sanskrit. There is no Little Tradition vernacular chanting nor any bhajans or kīrtans (litanies in the local languages) at these occasions. Toward the end of the bhaṇḍārā, money, pieces of cloth, and blankets are distributed to the monastic guests. The expenditure at a bhaṇḍārā at the 1966 Prayāg kumbhamelā was 45 rupees (about \$9.40 prior to devaluation) per monk or novice. A Maṛwārī merchant from Jaipur sponsored a bhaṇḍārā for 380 monks and novices, spending an amount roughly equivalent to \$3,600.

As the melā continues, monastic and lay religious leaders, including the most famous paṇḍits of the land, address gatherings of many sizes, ranging from 200 to 20,000 persons. Loudspeaker and amplifier systems are placed all over the area. Again, doctrinal topics are discussed by the monks. Monks and lay teachers sit on a dias (paṇḍāl), and though each person has his full say, other monks and lay teachers on the paṇḍāl speak up to support or criticize their fellow discussants. It is these meetings alone that coordinate the present state of Hindu theological and exegetical learning in a seemingly informal manner. In previous centuries it was exclusively at the kumbhamelās that Indian learning was solidified and presented to

a representative body of brāhmaṇ, Buddhist, and Jain religious opinion.

The chief event is the procession that starts in the early hours of the morning, well before sunrise. The monastic organizations march in a hierarchical fashion. At each kumbhamelā, one order starts the procession, followed by others. Ideally, all monastic orders should get their chance over the decades. In fact, however, it is the most highly prestigious orders that do. During the past four kumbhamelās at Hardvār and Prayāg, the Daśanāmī Order of Sannyāsins, founded by Śaṅkarācārya in the 9th century A.D., opened the procession; and it was their senior monks who stepped into the river for the most auspicious dip, which has to coincide with the moment at which Jupiter actually enters Aquarius. Very often, the naked Nāga sādhus (a militant protective force within the Daśanāmī fold) march ahead of the procession, but they usually cede the first dip to the senior Daśanāmī monks.

At the end of the procession, all return to the tents and the kumbhamelā technically is over. But it takes an average of another two or three weeks for the participants to disperse after the event. At all other times, Hindu religious life is topographically diffuse. It takes place in millions of homes and at thousands of pilgrim sites.

In the study of a complex culture, a social scientist should look for indigenous classifications before he embarks on making his own. The case of centers of pilgrimage in India is particularly relevant in this connection: there is a kind of built-in classification into firthas and pīthas, i.e. nonsectarian and sectarian places of pilgrimage. The classification is incomplete and not too precise, hence some additional specifications are required that we shall supply in this section.

We can classify place of pilgrimage under three headings:

- a) All-India, trans-sectarian sites, marked 'A' in the subsequent enumeration.
- b) Regionally-important sites, usually with some sectarian emphasis, but not exclusively sectarian. These will be marked 'R' in the enumeration.
- c) Sites of purely sectarian importance. These will be marked 'S.'

All-India trans-sectarian Sites. The trans-sectarian places visited by people from all over the subcontinent number about two dozen, but there is a traditional list of seven, this being one of the 'holy numbers' in the Indian as in many other mythocentric traditions. There is some divergence in the enumeration of the sites constituting the 'great seven' (saptamahāfirtha). Devotees from different parts of the country as well as from different sectarian backgrounds usually replace one or two of the 'great seven' with some of their own special predilection, which may be personal or traditional. These universally holy cities are: Kāñcīpuram (Conjeeveram, forty miles south of Madras), Dvāraka (Dwarka) in Gujarat, Ayodhya (near Faizabad, U. P.), Mathurā (halfway between Delhi and Agra), Vārāṇasī (Banaras, U. P.), Ujjain in southern Rajasthan, and Hardvār (Hardwar) near Dehra Dun at the Upper Ganges. However, only the most learned -- and among them again, mostly South

Indian brāhmanṣ -- would agree on the first as one of the seven. Others, perhaps a larger number, would list Prayāg (Allahabad) as one of the seven. Prayāg is at the confluence of the three rivers (trivēnī): the Ganges, Jamnā, and the no-longer-existing, semi-mythological Sarasvatī. It is one of the most important centers of worship and ritualistic purification, in addition to being the foremost kumbhamelā site.

Kāñcipuram (Conjeeveram) is known to most paṇḍits particularly of the Tamil region. Quite recently it has gained some importance through the process of all-India Sanskritization.<sup>16</sup> Kāñcipuram is the seat of one of the Śaṅkarācāryas, or heads of the Daśanāmī Order of monks, the most learned and highly prestiged order. The present head is a scholarly man of great intelligence. The widely read (but in India, at least, highly unpopular) book by Arthur Koestler<sup>17</sup> has made the man and the place known outside India. But North Indian pilgrims seldom visit Kāñcipuram unless they happen to be on a pilgrimage to Rāmeśvaram, another place often listed among the 'great seven,' located about 250 miles south of Madras city.

Regionally-important Sites. The title might suggest a somewhat vacuous category, for no doubt every local paṇḍit would regard his shrine as regionally -- or universally -- important. At railway and bus stations near the site, pamphlets extolling the importance of the temple or the bathing place are given to travelers, and much of this literature ascribes vastly exaggerated ritualistic importance to the sanctuary in question. Phrases like '... is the Kāśī (Banaras) of Southern Andhra,' or '... bestows merit comparable to a pilgrimage to Amarnāth (in the Himalayas)' abound. However, I would suggest that this sort of literature, along with all the local panegyrics, could be used as aids for determining which shrines really are of all-India importance. The shrines with which the local sanctuary is compared as granting similar rewards are indeed the all-India shrines.

Another site of regional importance is Tiruvannāmalai in the North Arcot District of Madras. This is the place where Ramana Maharishi lived and died less than two decades ago. It is of particular interest to our survey, since Ramana sought this place out as a young man because it was already a shrine of local and, theoretically at least, national sectarian status. Arunācalam, the mount at whose foot Ramana's

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16. The concept of 'Sanskritization' has been useful for modern anthropologists dealing with India. In various contexts, the term has been used by M.N. Srinivas, McKim Marriott, D.G. Mandelbaum, Milton Singer and others. The first systematic statement of 'Sanskritization' can be found in M.N. Srinivas, Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India, p. 30, and was expanded upon in his article "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization," The Far Eastern Quarterly, XV, 4 (August, 1956).

17. Arthur Koestler, The Lotus and the Robot, New York: Macmillan, 1960.



monastery was built, contains one of the five bhūtaliṅgas ('element - liṅgas'), sanctuaries where Lord Śiva manifests himself as a liṅga made of one nature element each: Ekāmbareśvara (the earth-liṅga at Kāñcīpuram), Kālahastī (the water-liṅga), Jambukeśvara (the air-liṅga), Cidambaram (the ether-liṅga, an empty space encircled by oil-lights designating the 'ethereal' formless liṅga), and Arunācalam (the fire-liṅga at Tiruvannāmalai). The national Śaivite importance of these five element-manifestations of Śiva is 'theoretical,' the sites are rarely visited by non-Dravidian pilgrims except perhaps by some itinerant monastic specialists. Tiruvannāmalai is the only exception. The fact that it is an exception is largely due to the recent presence of Ramana Maharishi, a sage of great stature in the best traditional sense.

There is here a feed-back from regional importance to all-India importance through processes of 'universalization.' The theologically less rigid, more eclectic and flexible type of Vedānta which has gained so much currency in India and abroad was practiced and, eventually, popularized by teachers who started their careers in sites of regional importance or of a sectarian type. As these teachers found admirers and followers in distant parts of the land, the places of their 'spiritual sādhanā' (religious career) tended to become well-known not only among their followers, but also by much larger local or all-India groups.

The case of Dakṣiṇeśvar near Calcutta is perhaps the most remarkable. Here Ramakrishna Paramahansa served as a temple priest, and the later swamis of the Ramakrishna Order, particularly the world-famous Swami Vivekananda (then the skeptical youth Narendra Dutt) visited him. The shrine is a pretty gruesome edifice from an architectural viewpoint. It was commissioned by Rani Rasmani, a low-caste (and low-taste) pious lady of great wealth in the mid-19th century. During Ramakrishna's lifetime, Bengali bhaktas (devotees) who had heard his fame, came to the place for his darśan, and in addition worshiped at the Kālī image and the twelve Śiva temples within the compound (it is customary to pay one's respects to all other deities in the locality as well, if one has come seeking darśan from the residing saint). Within five decades of Ramakrishna's death, after Vivekananda had preached Hinduism in America and Europe, foreigners who had become attracted to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda brand of Hinduism began to visit Dakṣiṇeśvar. Today, in addition to the local semi-urban and metropolitan Bengali clientele, a growing number of visitors from all over India flock to Dakṣiṇeśvar. In a very literal sense, this one-time local shrine has become a site of all-India importance.

Sites of Purely Sectarian Importance. With our previous caveats on multiple overlap, we now come to the last type of site. 'Sectarian' in India may mean one or both of two things: 'pertaining to the worship of a particular deity as dominant at a place,' and 'following a specific type of ritual linked to a specific sect.' Although virtually all the great gods of the Hindu pantheon are worshiped at most places, there is usually one dominant deity. This, however, does not suffice to characterize a shrine as 'sectarian' unless it is visited exclusively, or almost



exclusively, by the followers of one sect. For example, though Śiva as Lord Viṣvanāth is worshiped at Banaras, Banaras cannot be called a 'sectarian' place; Hindus of all sects visit the site. On the other hand, Tirupati, Śrīraṅgam, and Uḍipi, though visited by people of many sects, follow the Pañcarātra type of ritual, which is distinctly Vaiṣṇavite.

One large and important category of sacred sites is sectarian according to both the definitions given above. These are sites of tantric importance. Here the Goddess in one form or the other is the dominant deity, and the ritual is specifically tantric,<sup>18</sup> following a set of texts and instructions that belong to a separate, sectarian corpus of sacerdotal literature. Most of the original tantric sites are no longer extant, and apart from Kāmakhyā in Assam (see below), the active tantric shrines are small and quite unknown to Hindus at large. Some shrines, like Jvālāmukhī in the Punjab, have undergone 'universalization' in the sense that their purely tantric origins have been forgotten and they now serve much wider, non-sectarian audiences. Many of the tantric shrines listed in the relevant literature<sup>19</sup> may never have existed in a geographical sense, as tantrism espouses a process which Professor Eliade calls 'hypostasization.'<sup>20</sup> During this process certain meditative phenomena occurring in the contemplative's mind are extrapolated and given the names of sites, irrespective of whether or not there actually has been any connection with a geographical area.

#### IV. The Topography of Indian Sanctuaries

This longest section is much too short to do even minimal justice to its title. A more complete, but unfortunately uncritical and obsolete, list is found in H. V. Glasenapp's book.<sup>21</sup> J. H. Dave's Immortal India<sup>22</sup> also contains some material on the subject.

We shall here proceed by geographical and administrative areas, starting in the Northwest of the subcontinent, and concluding in the Southeast. As indicated earlier, each site will be marked 'A' for all-India importance, 'R' for predominantly regional or local importance, and 'S' for predominantly sectarian importance. There

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18. See A. Bharati, The Tantric Tradition, London: Rider & Co., 1966.

19. See D. C. Sircar, "The Śākta Pīthas," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, XIV, 1, Calcutta, 1948.

20. See Mircea Eliade, Yoga: Immortality and Freedom, tr. by W. R. Trask, Pantheon, 1958, Bollingen Series, No. 56.

21. H. V. Glasenapp, Heilige Stätten Indiens, Munich: George Muller Verlag, 1928.

22. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957-61. Vol. I, chs. 1, 2, 5-7, 10-12, 16, 21, 23.

will be some combinations, such as 'A, R' where a single ascription would be inexact.

## PUNJAB

Katās - R - This is a holy lake in Jhelum District, West Pakistan. There are seven temples reportedly built by the Pāṇḍavas who spent part of their peregrinatory years in this region. Previous to partition, roughly 80,000 pilgrims visited the place at the annual festival.

Amritsar - S - This city is the main sanctuary of the Sikhs. The Baṛā Darbār Sāheb, referred to as the 'Golden Temple' in tourist brochures, is a magnificent shrine. One can state with assurance that it is as important to the Sikhs as St. Peter's in Rome is to Roman Catholics. No such statement could be made for Hindus, for all Hindus would not accept Banaras or any other sites as the chief center of Hindu worship. Members of all faiths may enter the Baṛā Darbār Sāheb-- including Muslims; there is no fear of pollution as in Hindu shrines. Every person who follows the minimum rules of washing his feet in a well outside the shrine, and of circumambulating the Guru Granth Sāheb<sup>23</sup> (the holy book that is kept in the center of the shrine as the main and only functional icon) is perfectly welcome. The temple or gur(u)dvāra ('gate of the guru,' as the Sikhs call their shrines) is surrounded by an artificial pond. The Tibetans-- and this is not known to most Sikhs, not even the mahants or religious administrators-- regard this pond as the lake of nectar from which Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Vajrayāna was born. It is for this reason that many Tibetan pilgrims can be seen visiting the pond, not, as most Sikhs think, on account of the widespread diffusion of Guru Nānak's teachings. Guru Nānak, the founder of Sikhism (1469-1539), though indirectly connected with the foundation of this main gurdvāra, has his own commemorative shrine in Kartārpur, West Pakistan. Wealthy Sikhs pay homage at that place once a year, traveling under Pakistani police protection.

The Baṛā Darbār Sāheb contains, among many other administrative subunits, a pilgrims' kitchen (laṅgar), where the Punjabi staple food, roṭī (hot unleavened wheat flakes) and dāl (pulses) are served to pilgrims, Sikh or non-Sikh, any time of the day or night, free of charge. The roṭīs are called praśāda in Sikh terminology, since they function as praśād (see above). After the simple ceremonies conducted several times a day, the kaṛā praśād is distributed within the temple proper-- a sweet pastry concoction consisting of one-third ghi (clarified butter), one-third sugar, and one-third sūjī (cream of wheat).

Jvālāmukhi (Jawalamukhi) - R, S - The 'goddess of the flaming mouth' near Kangra

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23. There is a new four-volume English translation of the book by Dr. Gopal Singh, The Guru Granth Sāhib, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1966.



PILGRIMAGE SITES IN INDIA

contains a shrine to the Goddess as Vajreśvarī, 'Lady of the Thunderbolt.' Although the Buddhist Vajrayāna significance and origin<sup>24</sup> have long been forgotten, Hindu worship here is decidedly anomic. Punjabi Hindus are not otherwise devotees of the highly tantricized form of the Mother Goddess, though there are clues of it even in the Sikh Guru Gobind Singh's legend. At this place, khatrī boys between ages seven and eleven are given their muṇḍan, 'hair-shaving' ceremony. This is a pre-initiatory rite and applies only to boys of the khatrī caste, that ranks between sūdras and baniyās (merchants), though the khatrīs themselves claim to be kṣatriyas or Rājapūts. The temple is administered by priests of the Bhojakī class, one not recognized as brāhmaṇ by other brāhmaṇs. About 50,000 people visit during the two festivals in March and September; it is during the latter period that the hair-shaving rites are performed.

Kurukṣetra (Kurukshetra) - A - Close to the large city of Ambala which forms the border between Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, is the site where Kṛṣṇa revealed the Bhagavad Gītā<sup>25</sup> to Arjuna at the beginning of the decisive battle of the Mahābhārata. The place is said to have 360 temples. Bathing in the Ganges here during lunar and solar eclipses is regarded as highly meritorious and as a 'salvation-giving' act (mokṣakārya) by the local paṇḍits. Well over 1,000,000 people from all over India visit the place during those eclipses. It is easily accessible by train and bus.

## THE HIMALAYAN TIER

Mount Kailāśa and Lake Mānasarovar - A - All of the Himalayan range is sacred to Hindus and to Buddhists of the Northern tradition. To the Hindus it is the divine abode of Śiva and his spouse, Pārvatī 'the mountain-daughter' (also called Ūmā, Devī, etc.). Lake Mānasarovar and Mount Kailāśa, within viewing distance of each other, are specifically the home of the God and Goddess. Until ten years ago, hundreds of pilgrims from India, together with many more Tibetan pilgrims, for whom the location has a totally different legendary significance, annually circumambulated the Lake and Mount Kailāśa (a three-day tour). This has come to an end, as both are situated well within Tibetan boundaries, four days from Lipulekh on the Indian and Taghlakot on the Tibetan side.

The most important pilgrim sites one can still visit on the Indian side of the range

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24. See A. Bharati, Great Tradition and Little Traditions: Indological Studies in Cultural Anthropology, Banaras: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1967, especially the chapter on Pilgrimage.

25. This text has suffered many English translations. One of the few that can be recommended as a serious, scholarly work is by Franklin Edgerton, The Bhagavad Gītā, New York: Harper Torchbooks TB 115 (paperback), 1964.



are the caves of Amarnāth in the Jammu-Kashmīr area, and Kedārnāth and Badrināth in the Pauri-Garhwal region of Uttar Pradesh. In spite of the extremely difficult ascent to all three shrines, as well as to Gangotri, where the Ganges enters negotiable territory on Indian soil, many old men and women, including some who have never seen a mountain, let alone snow, conduct this hard pilgrimage once in a lifetime.

Amarnāth - A - 'the immortal Lord,' i.e., Śiva, resides in a cave high up in the mountains in the form of an ice-liṅga, a stalagmite of impressive size.

Badrināth - A - This site in the Himalayan part of Uttar Pradesh is no doubt the most romantic of all Viṣṇu shrines in India. Viṣṇu as 'Lord Badarī' (the mountain-jujube fruit) resides here in a powerful, simple-styled temple that is closed and under snow for over eight months of the year. Śaṅkarācārya, the monistic reformer of the 9th century was the alleged founder of the shrine. Up to this very day, the head priest is a Nambūdiri (a brāhmaṇ from Keralā) from Śaṅkarācārya's own caste. The icon is a black stone about three feet high. It carries a large diamond in its center and is draped in precious gold brocade. There is a small mirror right above the image that reflects not only the image itself, but also the entire surroundings and the pilgrims who have made their entry into the sanctum. The sanctum itself is very small and cannot accommodate more than a fraction of the pilgrims who come to visit within less than a 12-week period every year. The Nambūdiri head priest, called the Rāval, is the only person who can perform the actual worship of the image. The post is semi-hereditary and carries great honor. It is also fairly lucrative, as part of the pilgrims' donations go to the Rāval.

Kedārnāth - A - This site, situated about 11,000 feet above sea level just like Badrināth, is within 50 miles of Badrināth as the crow flies and is sacred to Śiva, the tutelary deity of the entire Himalayas. The icon is one of the twelve all-India liṅgas, and it is visited by Śaivites from all over India, but by no means exclusively by Śaivites. The highly sectarian Liṅgāyat sect of Śaivites from Mysore has its own temple here, frequented mainly by Liṅgāyats, who dispatch their own Jaṅgama (monk-priest) to look after their shrine. But the main Kedārnāth temple has its own priests, whose Saivite origin is far less strong than that of the Liṅgāyats. The Liṅgāyat priests have no ritualistic role, nor any special privilege in the main temple.

## UTTAR PRADESH

Hardvār and Hrishikesh, both close to the city of Dehra Dun in the Himalayan foothills and not more than a three hours' drive by car from Delhi, are among the most important monastic centers in India. They are located approximately forty miles south of the point where the Ganges enters the North Indian Plain. Most of the important Hindu sects, monastic and lay, have their establishments in the vicinity of the two

cities or within the city complexes themselves. Both are genuinely religious towns, even to the extent that the municipality enforces religious prohibitions. In Hardvār, no meat can be bought or cooked, nor is there any liquor officially available. The river is replete with enormous fish, which are fed 'ātā-golī' (wheat balls) sold to the pilgrims. Fish must not be caught anywhere between Hardvār and Hrishikesh, and the city imposes high fines on the infractor.

Hardvār (Hardwar) - A - The main attraction in Hardvār (the word means 'gate of Śiva' for the Śaivites when pronounced 'har-dvār,' and 'gate of Viṣṇu' for the Vaiṣṇavites when pronounced 'hari-dvār') is a water expanse of about 200 square yards adjacent to the river. It is called Brahmākūṇḍ, 'pond of Brahmā,' in sophisticated, Sanskritized terminology, but most pilgrims and local residents refer to it as Har-kī-paurī ('steps of the Lord'). The site is visited at all times, and immersions are conducted night and day, the number of visitors ranging from about 50 during the hours before dawn, to 1,000,000 or more during the kumbhamelā (see above). The Har-kī-paurī is flanked by a piece of land that forms a narrow peninsula in the river. J. K. Birla, a rich merchant, built a large clocktower in the midst of it, but the mixture of styles does not diminish the continuing intense atmosphere of eager devotion. Bathing at the Har-kī-paurī is thought to be almost as meritorious as at the trivenī (see above) at Allahabad or at the ghāṭs in Banaras. Punjabis regard Hardvār as the most exalted site; it is within very close reach of the Punjabi area.

Hrishikesh (Rishikesh) - A - This town has been the permanent home of many svatantra ('independent'), i.e., organizationally unattached, sādhus for several centuries. One of the most important locations in India, where 'independent' sādhus convene and live for short and long periods, is the Svargāśram ('heaven-āśram'). The sādhus stay in individual wooden hamlets (kūṭī), and follow the traditional life of meditation without congregation. They are fed once a day by the agents of an organization founded by an itinerant monk in the 19th century. Here, Hindus from all over India who want to acquire spiritual or secular merit may feed one, two, or many sādhus at a time. This highly meritorious feast is called bhaṇḍārā. As the monks sit and eat and chant Vedic verses, they are fed sumptuously, usually by members of the sponsor's family. Coins and blankets, or pieces of cloth, are then distributed to the monks seated in the paṅgat, the 'line' of sacred consumers (see the section on kumbhamelā above).

During the past three decades, Hrishikesh has gained additional international fame. The late Swami Śivānanda Sarasvafī created the 'Forest University' in this area, an āśram of great wealth and administrative efficiency. The internationally known 'Divine Life Society' has its headquarters at this place. A large amount of pietistic literature is published in English and in all Indian languages from this center.

Mathurā - A - This city on the right bank of the river Jamnā (Yamunā in former usage) is the birthplace of Kṛṣṇa, the eighth and most popular incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Mathurā is counted among the seven chief shrines of Hinduism, but it is not usually visited by Śaivites or Goddess-worshippers. The sacerdotal institutions here are highly organized and lucrative. The most important shrine is the Dvārakādhīśa ('Lord of Dvārakā') Kṛṣṇa temple, created by commission of pious merchants only during the last century.

Brindāvan - S - This site in the immediate neighborhood of Mathurā is possibly the most attractive Kṛṣṇa sanctuary. It has inspired poets and religious teachers over the past five centuries. The Bengali Vaiṣṇava teacher, Caitanya,<sup>26</sup> reportedly 'discovered' the site, and ever since it has been the center of Kṛṣṇa worship par excellence. The Bānke Bihārī ('crooked Kṛṣṇa') temple ('crooked' in the sense of being 'bent;' the body of Kṛṣṇa is traditionally 'curved' in three points) is visited day and night throughout the year by thousands of Vaiṣṇavite pilgrims.

Ayodhyā - A - Close to the railway junction of Faizabad, U. P., is the birthplace of Rāmacandra, the hero of the Rāmāyaṇa, and the seventh incarnation of Viṣṇu. It is one of the seven chief places of pilgrimage. Literally millions of rhesus monkeys swarm about the area. They are identified, by local tradition, with the vānaras, the monkey warriors of Hanumān, Rāma's faithful servant and the epitome of bhakti or religious devotion. A pilgrimage to Ayodhyā ranks almost evenly with one to Banaras: it gives salvation, or it bestows merit of an exalted order.

Prayāg (Allahabad) - A - This sacred complex is referred to as tīrtharāja ('king of shrines') in Hindu literature. Few enumerations of the 'great seven' omit the site. The trivenī ('confluence of the three') where the Ganges, Jamnā, and the no-longer-visible Sarasvatī rivers meet lies close to the city. This is the undisputedly supreme bathing site in Hindu India. The area is under the sacerdotal control of the Prāgvāl brāhmaṇs, who function as caretakers and guide the pilgrims through the complex rituals.

When a pilgrim arrives, he must first have all the hair removed from his chin and head by the local establishment barber (it will not do, for instance, if the pilgrim does the shaving himself). He then descends into the water and hands the first sum of money to his Prāgvāl guide as he does so. The wealthiest pilgrims now give a cow, though as an alternate they may give the price of a godān or 'cow-gift' (Rs. 550 in 1966). The bath consists of one or several total immersions, at the conclusion of which milk and flowers are thrown into the river as offerings and uncooked rice or money is given to the attending Prāgvāl. Those who have more time or feel more strongly motivated repeat the bath every day, the quantity or value of gifts to the Prāgvāl decreasing as the days go by. Immersions conducted alone, without the

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26. See Edward C. Dimock, The Lotus of the Hidden Moon, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

guidance of the Prāgvāl, are not encouraged. Brāhmaṇ and other ritualistically knowledgeable pilgrims often learn the formulas used for the immersions and would then dispense with the Prāgvāl's help. However, on departing from Prayāg, the pilgrim must give a farewell token to his assigned Prāgvāl, regardless of how much or how little assistance he might have obtained during his visit. As he hands over his final gift, he bows to the Prāgvāl who gives him three gentle strokes on his back with the palm of his right hand, declaring him suphal ('successful') in the pilgrimage.

Prayāg contains a large number of shrines. It is also the site of the most important kumbhamelā (see above). Just as shrines of local or regional or sectarian importance all over India compare their own merit-giving capacity to that of Banaras, shrines close to a river or located inside a water expanse compare themselves to Prayāg: 'This place...is the veritable Prayāg of Andhra (Arcot, Tinnevely, etc.),' is the invariable formula contained in the sthalapurāṇa, the text extolling the mythology and the ritualistic importance of the place.

Vārāṇasī (Banaras, Benares) - A - If any Hindu were asked offhand which city he regarded as the holiest in India, he would probably hesitate no less in naming Vārāṇasī than the Muslim would in naming Mecca. This does not preclude the possibility that a 'modern' Hindu would call it dirty, and advise his Western friends to see the Damodar River Valley Project rather than Banaras. The name Vārāṇasī, garbled into Banaras, is a popular contraction of 'Varuṇā' (Barna) and 'Assī,' the two rivulets flowing into the Ganges and marking the limits of the sacred complex. In almost all temples of India, particularly in the South, 1,500 and more miles away from Vārāṇasī, there will be a comparative reference to Vārāṇasī or Kāśī, the proper Sanskrit name of the city. In Kāñcīpuram (Conjeeveram), itself one of the 'seven great' sites situated in Tamilnad, there is a corridor barely wide enough to crawl through, leading around the sanctum. This passage supposedly leads to Kāśī, the idea being that undertaking the hardship of crawling through would equal the merit of having made an actual pilgrimage to the holiest of all cities. Many sanctuaries are officially called 'the Banaras of...(the North, East, Andhra, etc.);' as for instance, Uttarkashi in Pauri Garwal, en route to Gangotri. The ritualistically significant part of the city is surrounded by a road, more imagined than paved, of pañcakoṣṭi (five koses or about ten miles), circumambulating which is part of the observance during a pilgrimage to Vārāṇasī. Any person who dies within sight of the Ganges inside this pañcakoṣṭi, or better still, with part of his body immersed in the supremely purifying waters, will be released from rebirth. Śiva Himself whispers the tāraka-mantra, the sacred syllable that yields redemption, into the dying person's ear.

Banaras has for centuries been the center of religious learning. Many who wanted to be heard as teachers of religion preached there. The Buddha held his first sermon in Isipatanā, the present-day Sārnāth, seven miles from the city center. Today, Banaras Hindu University ranks as chief center of modern education based on a Hindu outlook on life.



of the twelve 'great liṅgas.' On the 15th day of the month of Kārtik (October-November) about 20,000 people gather here for a bath and darśan of the presiding deity. When this date coincides with a lunar eclipse, an influx of over 200,000 visitors has been reported. Mandhātā is the only place in India where the Vedic horse sacrifice (aśvamedha) was being conducted by petty rulers and chiefs as late as the 18th century. But the mares that were brought were often emaciated and moribund; hence, the Indian proverb about a thin or sickly domestic animal, 'It is ready to be taken to Mandhātā.'

Ujjain or Ujjainī (Avantikā in Sanskrit) - A - This shrine is situated on the banks of the Siprā river in the former princely State of Gwalior and is one of the 'great seven' shrines known, in name at least, to most Hindus. When Viṣṇu dismembered Satī's body after Dakṣa's sacrifice, her elbow descended on this site; hence the strong tantric overtones in much of the ritual conducted at Ujjain. The site has been important for many centuries; Kālīdāsa describes its beauty in verses 34 to 36 of his famous poem, 'Meghadūta' ('Cloud Messenger'). The most important temple is that of Mahākāla, 'Great Time' or 'The Great Black One,' a pervasive epithet of Śiva. The original temple was destroyed by Iltutmish, an iconoclast Muslim chieftain; the present shrine is quite new. Three important festivals attract large crowds of pilgrims from all over India: Vaiśākha, in April-May (the Indian spring festival at the beginning of the hot season); Kārtik in October-November; and Śivarātri (the 'night of Śiva') in February (this festival is celebrated in many parts of India and is, perhaps, the only one in which some degree of fasting is observed by all, including men). Every twelfth year, when the planet Jupiter enters the sign of Leo, the Simhastha ('Lion's stand') festival is celebrated at Ujjain, attracting over 100,000 people. Among the numerous smaller sites of pilgrim interest is the Cave of Bhartrhari. It is here that the much fabled king, after enjoying all the pleasures of the world, retired for meditation, composing the famous four 'centuries of verse,' so well known to students of Sanskrit.

## RAJASTHAN

Puṣkara - R - Lake Puṣkara and the sanctuary on the little island in the Lake is the only temple to the demiurge Brahmā, first of the 'trinity' Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Śiva. The legend has it that a curse on the creator-god, pronounced by a ṛṣi (a sage; the story of the curse is long and involved) caused Brahmā to have but one shrine, obviously quite incommensurate with his mythological importance. Puṣkara has five temples: one to Brahmā; one to Sāvitrī (here the spouse of Brahmā); one to Varāha, the third (wild-boar) incarnation of Viṣṇu; one to Śiva; and one to Devī (the Mother Goddess). No living beings may be destroyed in and near the Lake, and fishing is prohibited, like at Hardvār. The steps that lead from the mansions of the formerly rich Rājapūts into the Lake are now used by pilgrims of all castes.

Ekliṅgī - R - This temple to 'the One (i.e., Śiva) of a single Liṅga' is located twelve miles from the large city of Udaipur, one-time seat of Rājput splendor. To many Rājputs, Ekliṅgī is the tutelary deity, and several rulers referred to themselves as 'vazir,' caretaker, of Lord Ekliṅgī. The temple contains a black marble image of the four-headed Śiva, a rarer manifestation of the God who is more frequently called 'five-headed.' Once a year, the Maharāṇa of Udaipur conducts the royal worship of Ekliṅgī. The professional brāhmaṇ priest stands back at this ceremony to let the kṣatriya ruler perform the sacerdotal function, a thing extremely rare in Hinduism.

Nāthdvāra - S - Located thirty-two miles northeast of Udaipur, Nāthdvāra is an extremely affluent Vaiṣṇavite center. Kṛṣṇa as Śrīnātha, Lord of Lakṣmī, was installed here as the reigning deity by the descendants of saint-philosopher Vallabhācārya, 14th century founder of the puṣṭimārga sect, a tantricized form of Vaiṣṇavism quite prevalent among some Gujarati castes. The head priest of this shrine, the Mahāgosain, is a linear descendant of Vallabhācārya. He controls the substantial wealth of the Mewār region. This has been drastically curtailed by the recent land reform acts. The last Nāthdvāra head priest was notorious for his enormous wealth and for his extravagant ways. The annual gifts brought by pilgrims amount to about Rs. 500,000 (\$70,000); and before 1950, another Rs. 300,000 came to him from land revenues.

Mount Ābū - A, S - This mountain rising about 3,000 feet above the plains is probably the most important Jain sanctuary. But there is hardly a place in India sacred to one cult or 'religion' that does not also have token shrines of some other sects. The Hindus and Jains of the baniyā (merchant) castes in Gujarat and Rajasthan have long been intermarrying, worshiping Hindu and Jain divinities in the process. Śiva has a few stately temples on Mount Ābū. Whereas thousands of Hindus visit both the Śiva temples and the main Jain sanctuaries, the Jains do not usually worship Śiva, mainly because the phallic symbolism connected with the Śiva cult is repugnant to them. In certain places Hindus and Jains worship the same icon as different entities; thus Hindus may worship a particular icon as Śiva, while the Jains worship it as Pārśvanātha (one of the founders of Jainism); they may not even be aware that others around them are worshiping a different representation. If the matter is brought up, specialists around the place may declare, 'but' these divinities are the same.' This is in line with the classical postulate of samanvaya, that enjoins the stressing of essential similarities and possible identities in cult and thought whenever there is an apparently contradictory situation.

## GUJARAT

Siddhpuri - R - This shrine is of great local importance but is hardly known outside of Gujarat. The Hindu śrāddha (obsequial rite) for mothers who have died some violent death is performed at this place. It is called mātri-gayā-śrāddha ('the

śrāddha-Gayā for the mother'). The place is thus likened to Gayā in importance, Gayā (see below) being the center for śrāddha ritual on an all-India scale. When a pilgrim arrives, the priests first check their ledgers to find out if an ancestor of the pilgrim has had a rite performed at Siddhpuri; if so, the priest whose ancestor served the pilgrim's forbear will take over. The pilgrim stays in his priest's house for the duration of his visit. A barber shaves his head, and money is given to the barber and the priest at the same time. The clothes which the pilgrim wore before his bath go to his priest as a gift. During the bath he has his priest recite the śrāddha-mantras, as the pilgrim throws flowers, milk, and other ingredients into the river as prescribed offerings to his departed mother. On the second day, the pilgrim is conducted to Kapilāśrama, a site where the famous Vedic sage Kapila is supposed to have had his hermitage. Here, the pilgrim takes a dip in three different ponds. He then presents his wet clothing, once more, to his priest.

The quantity of cooked food to be given to the various brāhmaṇs is fixed and unalterable: the worshiper gives sixteen morsels of rice on behalf of his deceased mother to his own priest, and twelve morsels to the attendant at each bathing place.

Girnār - R, S - This shrine in the Kathiawar region is of local importance to Hindus, and of all-India status to Jains. Newly-wed Hindu couples from the area visit the shrine of Ambā-mātā (the 'Universal Mother,') on one of the hillocks. There they tie their clothes together (a repeat performance of one of the rituals of the actual wedding ceremony), then offer a coconut to the Goddess invoking Her to bestow a lasting matrimonial bliss and male offspring to them. Nearby, there is a temple of Kālikā, the Goddess Kālī in her terrible form. In former times, tantrics of the Aghorī sect are reported to have eaten feces and human meat as part of the ritual; today's worship at the place is quite innocuous. Many Bengalis from Bombay visit the shrine, as Kālī is tutelary to the Bengalis. To the Jains, the place is of extreme importance as the locality where Neminātha, the twenty-second Tīrthaṅkara or patron-founder of Jainism, did his penance (tapasyā). The black idol of Neminātha is decorated with bracelets of massive gold and glittering jewels of unassessed value.

Dvārakā (Dwaraka) - A - One of the seven most important Hindu sites is located in the former princely state of Baroda. It is here that Kṛṣṇa spent his mature, conformist years as king with his wives Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā. In addition to the Kṛṣṇa complex, Dvārakā is also one of the four headquarters of the Daśanāmī-Sannyāsī monks whose order was founded by Śaṅkarācārya in the 9th century. What makes the place so attractive for Hindus from all over India is the fact that virtually every major mythological theme has some connection with Dvārakā. In the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Dvārakā takes up many sections. Viṣṇu in his first incarnation as fish vanquished his demonic opponent in this area, restoring the Veda that the demon had robbed from the gods. Post-medieval popular lore adds to Dvārakā's attraction: at the temple of Kṛṣṇa at Ranchor the Rājput princess Mīrābāī, famous for her devotional songs known all over India and sung in classical, folk, modern,

and film settings, is said to have merged with the image of the God, after her long and passionate devotional career.

Somnāth - R - This must have been a very ancient shrine; however, it was destroyed and abandoned for many centuries. In the 1950's it was rebuilt and consecrated at great cost with all the religious heads of Hindu India present. The first President of India, the late Dr. Rajendra Prasad, presided over the function. It is here that Kṛṣṇa found his death through the arrow of a hunter who mistook him for a deer. Somnāth holds one of the twelve great liṅgas of Śiva.

Nāsik - A - This third center where kumbhamelās convene each sixth and twelfth year (see above) is on the banks of the Godāvari, one of the seven holy rivers of India. Mythologically, the site derives its importance from its being identified with the Pāñcavaṭī forest where the heroes of the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa did pleasant penance during the first part of their exile. The number of temples is very large, and there are at least a dozen big ponds and other bathing places spread over a small area. Viṣṇu is the chief deity of Nāsik. The most important temple is that of Bālaḥī (baby-Kṛṣṇa). This particular divinity is so gracious that he accepts invitations for dinner; a rich devotee may arrange this with the functionaries of the temple. Then a priestly contingent carries the idol on a palanquin to the devotee's house, where a great feast is arranged, with the idol presiding over the paṅgat (line of guests), attended by sādhus and brāhmaṇas who share the many-course vegetarian meal with divinity.

The temple of Rāmacandra as Kālarāma is no doubt one of the most attractive Hindu temples of modern origin (19th century). In the month of Caitra (March-April), Kālarāma's festival attracts roughly 100,000 people, mostly Gujaratis and Marathis. The festival lasts thirteen days. On the eleventh day, the pilgrims circumambulate the image, which is then carried around the city in solemn procession. Near the Kālarāma shrine there is the famous cave Sītāgumpha from which the demon-king Rūvaṇa kidnaped Sītā, Rāma's spouse.

Pilgrims usually spend three days at Nāsik. On the first, they bathe and fast. As at all pilgrim centers, they are not supposed to have any sexual relations with their wives for the duration of the active observances. The second day is given to ritual on behalf of their living and deceased blood relatives. On the third day, they visit the holy sites within the territory, or at least those to which they feel strong allegiance either because they belong to their kuladevatā (family-deity) or their iṣṭadevatā (deity of personal choice). At those shrines, they make the usual presents to the brāhmaṇas. The Rāmkuṇḍīā caste of brāhmaṇas here fulfill the same function as the Prāgvāls at Prayāg. They preserve ledgers containing the entries of visits completed over at least nine generations. Any pilgrim who finds a Rāmkuṇḍīā whose ancestors performed sacerdotal services for one of his own ancestors will automatically use him as his guide during his visit, and will give him the lion's share of the ritualistic fees and other gifts of a supererogatory nature.



## MAHARASHTRA

Pāndharpur - R - The Maharashtrian Hindus are devout, but they also tend to be parochial, and the state of Maharashtra has few nationally-known shrines. Pāndharpur is the most important holy site; very few among its visitors are non-Maharashtrians. It parallels Tirupati in Andhra (see below) in a way: although both sites are known to Hindus all over India, Tirupati is not visited by many non-Telugu-Tamil speakers, and Pāndharpur is not visited by many non-Maharashtrians. Viṭṭhobā or Viṭṭhal is the deity presiding over Pāndharpur. He is the Maharashtrian Viṣṇu and is the most popular deity for Maharashtrians of all castes. Though many Maharashtrian families, particularly Deśasth and Citpāvan brāhmaṇs, have Śiva and Dēvī as their kuladevatā, they all worship Viṭṭhobā when the occasion arises.

The folk-etymology of Viṭṭhobā connects the word with the Marāṭhī viṭṭh ('a brick'). A saintly person by the name of Puṇḍalika lived in the area at the time of Kṛṣṇa's earthly sojourn. Puṇḍalika was known for his intense devotion to his parents, on whom he attended day and night. When Kṛṣṇa came to visit him, Puṇḍalika was busy preparing food and a bath for his parents, so he asked Kṛṣṇa to wait until his filial duties were completed. He threw a brick (viṭṭh) to Kṛṣṇa so the God could rest one of his feet on it to wait until Puṇḍalika could serve his divine guest. This impressed Lord Kṛṣṇa so much that he commanded later generations to worship Him as standing on a brick.

The 'sleeping-chamber' (sejghar) of Viṭṭhobā contains a silver bed, placed at night within the inner sanctum (garbhagrha). Inside the garbhagrha there is the famous icon of Kṛṣṇa upon the brick (Viṭṭhobā, Viṭṭhal).

Behind the main shrine there are smaller temples of Raghumāī (Rukmiṇī, Kṛṣṇa's chief queen) and of Lakṣmī (the celestial spouse of Viṣṇu). This follows a ubiquitous mythological pattern: the cosmic spouse of the deity reincarnates as the worldly spouse of the respective divine incarnation.

The ritual at the main shrine differs in complexity and style from that conducted in the ancillary temples surrounding the main sanctuary. At the Viṭṭhobā shrine, the main priests are the baḍvā and the pūjārī (the term pūjārī means any ritualist in other parts of Hindu India, but here it refers exclusively to the chief sacerdotal specialists of the Viṭṭhobā shrine). They are assisted by a large number of subaltern priests belonging to slightly lower brāhmaṇ castes: the Beṇārī or Vedic hymnsingers, the Paricāraka who fetch water and other ingredients for the bath of the deity, the Haridāsa who sing in Marāṭhī accompanied by cymbals, the Dīngre who hold up a mirror to the God when he is dressed in the morning, the Dāṅge who police and protect the God with a silver club, and the Divte who carry torches accompanying the nocturnal ambulatory processions. All these groups belong to the Deśasth brāhmaṇs of Maharashtra; their offices are inherited through the male line, as are the titles to

the receipt of offerings and other temple income. Around 1940, the number of priestly functionaries of all these castes serving the Viṭṭhobā shrine and its ancillary temples was about 2,000. The chief festival is that of Viṭṭhobā in the month of Caitra (March-April); over 300,000 pilgrims, 90 per cent of them Maharashtrians, were counted in 1962.

Near the eastern gate of the large Viṭṭhobā temple there is a stone to which the one-time untouchable Mahārs brought their offerings, as they were not allowed to enter the temple precincts.

Pāndharpur is also connected with the life and the death of Nāmdeo, one of the great medieval saints, a contemporary of the village saints of the medieval bhakti cults flourishing all over India from the 15th to the 17th centuries.

## BIHAR

The name of the large Indian state Bihar derives from the Pali and Sanskrit vihāra ('a monastery'). Buddhism and Jainism had their historical origin in this area; one of the oldest Hindu dynasties, the Mauryās, ruled from Pāṭaliputra near Patna, the present state capital. Although the area, from a brāhmaṇical point of view, was well nigh the center of all heresies, the Hindus have one of their most important centers of pilgrimage here.

Gayā - A - The etymology of Gayā is unknown. The name is extremely old, and folklore etymologies are found in the Rāmāyaṇa and in several Purāṇas. Tradition connects it with the demon Gayāsura, who practiced yoga until his body became so pure that 'the gods could no longer leave it.' One of the boons which the demon asked for and obtained as a reward for his penance was that the place should forthwith be the chief location for all obsequial rites. Typically, any departed ancestor must be given a minimum of eleven śrāddhas by his relatives through ten years after his death. But if a relative makes the pilgrimage to Gayā, performs the śrāddha on his behalf, and deposits the piṇḍa (obsequial offering of water and rice kneaded into a ball) at this place, it cancels the soul's need for any further śrāddhas. The piṇḍa is deposited under the guidance of a Gayāvāl (the Gayā parallel to the Prāgvāl at Allahabad) at one, more, or all of the thirty-four vedīs of constituent shrines at the sacred complex of Gayā.

Gayā is one of the few places that requires pre-arrival observances: when a person sets out to perform śrāddha for an ancestor at Gayā, he must first circumambulate his own village five times before he sets out for Gayā, inviting the soul of his ancestor to accompany him on the arduous (and not inexpensive) pilgrimage. At the turn of the century, a complete set of obsequial observances, including visits to all the important bathing places and the sites of mythological relevance, cost about \$4. An

informant who did the complete circuit for his father in 1965 paid over \$125. Ideally, the visit should take three days; but pilgrims who complete their observance in a somewhat abbreviated manner usually leave after a day and a half, mainly for economic reasons. The main shrine is that of the 'Foot of Viṣṇu' (Viṣṇupāda), where the Lord's footprint, roughly two yards long, is worshiped.

The Hindu complex at Gayā<sup>27</sup> is physically and functionally quite distinct from the Buddhist locality, the world-famous Buddha-Gayā. There is actually just one point of contact: a Hindu pilgrim may deposit piṇḍa at the Mahābodhi-tree on the third day of his visit. But the Gayāvāls point out that this is neither important nor even recommended. Furthermore, the Gayāvāls do not receive any fee for this part of their clients' tour, as the Buddhist caretakers have to be paid for their assistance.

Buddha-Gayā - A - This is the place where Buddha in the last wake of the night achieved enlightenment under the Tree of Wisdom (bodhi). Tradition holds that the present tree is a direct descendant of the original one. Saplings of the present tree are sent to all parts of the world and planted by Buddhists as a token of merit and of religious identification. Thus, the bodhi tree is found in Ceylon, Thailand, and on the campus of the University of Hawaii, to mention just a few sites. The pilgrims at Buddha-Gayā are mostly alien visitors: Ceylonese, Thais, Burmese, Tibetans, and Japanese. Whether or not large numbers of recently-converted Buddhist Mohārs from Central India will begin to visit places like Buddha-Gayā remains to be seen.

The famous trapezoid-shaped Mahābodhi-temple in its present form is less than a hundred years old; but there is no doubt that the original shrine erected perhaps by the Emperor Aśoka in the third century B.C. or by some later Gupta or even Kushan King provided an archetype for later constructions.

The Buddhist pilgrims do not visit the Hindu complex at Gayā. In fact, hardly any except the most highly sophisticated Buddhist pilgrims know about the importance the Hindu complex has for the Hindus. Although some Buddhist societies perform obsequial rites that may have originally been derived from some form of brāhmanical śrāddha, the historical-geographical link with Gayā is simply not known to them.

Baijnāth (Vaidyanāth) - R - The shrine of Śiva, 'Lord of Vaidyas,' (of medical practitioners in the Āyurvedic tradition) is a popular shrine with Hindus from Bihar and Bengal. The story goes that Rāvaṇa deposited here a liṅga that he carried around during his wanderings in quest of Sītā. The liṅga liked the place so much that it stuck in the ground. When Rāvaṇa tried to dig it out with his finger, water filled the spot forming the present Śivagaṅgā, the main bathing place for the pilgrims.

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27. See L. P. Vidyarthi, The Sacred Complex of Hindu Gayā, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1962.

The liṅga, however, remained firm and Rāvaṇa finally left. Oddly enough, Baijnāth is not a particular favorite of the indigenous medical profession. People go there for the darśan of Śiva to obtain such general benefit as the God bestows.

Nālandā - S - The ancient Buddhist academy at Nālandā, destroyed by Bakhtyār Khalījī or his son in the 12th century, today lies along a branch line from Bukhtiarpur, not far from the town of Bihar Sharif. Recently it has gained fresh importance, for the Government of Bihar, aided by considerable external support, has built the Nālandā Institute of Postgraduate Buddhist Studies and Pali a hundred feet away from the old site. Burmese, Thai, Vietnamese, Tibetan, and other pilgrims may now be seen day after day circumambulating the ancient ruins.

Rājgīr (formerly Rājagṛha) - A, S - Although this site has religious significance for Hindus, it is especially sacred to the Buddhists and Jains. It was here that the Buddha delivered many of his sermons. This accounts for the fact that certain monks in Tibet and Mongolia have heard about Rājgīr, but not about Calcutta or Bombay. The 'vulture-peak' (grdhakūṭa) is the main attraction for the Buddhists. Since the end of World War II, a number of international Buddhist monastic organizations have set up their establishments in and around Rājgīr. Tibetan, Chinese, Ceylonese, Thai and other monasteries provide food and shelter for the pilgrims from their respective lands.

Pārasnāth (Pārśvanātha in Sanskrit) - S - Pārśvanāth was the twenty-third and last of the Tīrthaṅkaras, or founders of Jainism. This site in the district of Hazaribagh carries his name and is regarded as one of the five most important shrines for Jains from all over India. The main sanctuary is called sametaśikhara ('peak of equality') and is dedicated to all the Tīrthaṅkaras before and including Pārśvanāth who, according to orthodox Jain opinion, entered mokṣa (salvation) here in 730 B. C. The holy mountain contains a large number of attractive temples, some of them built in this century, the oldest in its present form being about 700 years of age. Although the ascent over the steps carved into the rock is quite arduous, over 10,000 pilgrims, both Śvetāmbaras and Digāmbaras<sup>28</sup> visit the place every year.

## WEST BENGAL

Kālīghāt - R - This site is, in a manner of speaking, the national shrine of the Bengalis, both from India and East Pakistan. Calcutta is the English garbled version of

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28. The two main Jain sub-divisions are the 'sky-clad' (Digāmbara) and the 'white-clad' (Śvetāmbara); these terms imply not only sartorial distinctions in previous periods, but also certain organizational and doctrinal differences. See W. Schubring, The Doctrine of the Jainas, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1962; also J.L. Jaini, Outlines of Jainism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940.



Kālīghāṭ ('the steps of Kālī,' the tutelary goddess of Bengal). In its present form the temple is just about 300 years old. It is owned by the Haldar caste of brāhmaṇs, who until quite recently took a large part of the temple's revenue. The famous goat-sacrifice is carried on throughout the year, with pilgrims from Calcutta and all other parts of Bengal bringing male goats as sacrificial gifts.

The most important festival of the Bengali year is Durgā Pūjā, or just 'poojah' in the British and Anglicized Bengali tradition. This central event takes place in October-November, when other parts of Hindu India celebrate Daśahrā (sometimes spelled Dusserah) by burning paper or straw effigies of Rāvaṇa and his relatives amidst much clamor and fun, as part of the dramatized story of the battle of Laṅkā in the Rāmāyaṇa. During the ten-day Durgā Pūjā in Bengal virtually every other activity in Calcutta grinds to a halt, including the 'municipality,' a Calcutta euphemism for garbage collection. The more general, domestic celebrations cannot be discussed here. The functions at the Kālīghāṭ temple center on the male goat sacrifice. During those ten days, the flow of blood must not cease for a moment at the temple, for this would be considered inauspicious for the coming year. The sacrifice is conducted in an ambulatory in the outer precincts of the main shrine. Until quite recently, wealthy Bengalis brought male water buffaloes to be sacrificed, since mahiṣāśura, the buffalo-demon, was Kālī-Durgā's arch foe whom she slew in battle. In spite of the Vaiṣṇavas' and other reformers' attempts through the centuries to stop or curb animal sacrifice at the chief center of Bengali worship, the tradition has never been broken effectively.

Nadiā (Navadvīp) - S - Two reasons make Nadiā a sacred site. On one hand, here was the place where Śrī Caitanya was born who later established his devotional, intensive, highly influential, vegetarian Vaiṣṇava cult.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, here also was the center of the postmedieval school of Navya-Nyāya logic.<sup>30</sup>

Bishnupur - R - This location, once the center of a powerful Bengali kingdom, is a favorite site among Bengalis. The main attraction is a cannon 'dalmadal' which was reportedly fired by the God Kṛṣṇa himself when the Marāthās attacked the area in the 17th century.

## ORISSA

Bhubaneswar (Bhubaneswar) - R - The present-day capital city of Orissa is named after the temple of bhuvaneśvara ('Lord of the Universe') i.e., Śiva. According

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29. See Edward C. Dimock, The Lotus of the Hidden Moon.

30. See Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Materials for the Study of Navya Nyāya Logic, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951, Harvard Oriental Series No. 40.

to mythology, Viṣṇu gave Śiva this temple after prevailing on him to abandon his own sacred city of Vārāṇasī (Banaras), since this site had everything Banaras did. There are several sacred tanks in the area; the most attractive among them is the bindusāgara ('ocean of drops'), supposedly containing milk, ghī, nectar, and other highly prized ingredients in addition to its ritualistically purifying water. Bathing in this tank is reputed to be as meritorious as bathing at the ghāṭs in Banaras. This is important: in almost every corner of India, north, south, east, and west, there is a place whose merit is equalled to that of the great shrines for the local population who cannot travel so far. Thus, Punjabis regard Hardvār as the most important place; Maharashtrians, Pāndharpur; South Indians, Tirupati. There is no doubt that local people actually do regard these shrines as equal to or even more meritorious than the nationally famous ones. I interviewed at least half a dozen Punjabi women who had only a vague idea about the existence of Banaras, but they all knew Hardvār, had been there, or wanted to go there on pilgrimage. Most religiously sophisticated South Indians know about Banaras and Prayāg. But many of them would regard Tirupati or Rāmeśvaram as at least equally meritorious. The regular visitors at Bhubanesvar who bathe in the bindusāgara tank probably feel the same way about Bhubanesvar.

Jagannāth-Puri - A - The old-time missionaries of the West referred to Jagannāth-Puri as the 'densest pit of wicked idolatry.' The German poet Freiligrath in the early 19th century recounted a tale well known by that time in Europe: the story of hundreds of fanatical devotees throwing themselves under the wheels of the processional 'Juggernaut' chariot.

Although Puri may have been an old Buddhist sanctuary, it is now an outstanding all-India Viṣṇu shrine. The four icons are not of the usual anthropomorphic type. The raw, almost unhewn pieces of large driftwood represent, from left to right, the disc of Viṣṇu sudarśana; Jagannāth ('Lord of the World'), i.e., Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa himself; Subhadrā (Jagannāth's sister, or, according to an alternative version, his wife); and finally Balarāma (his brother). Each of the figures is about equally large, even the disc, which is just a few inches smaller than Jagannāth. All four icons are seated on the ratnavedī ('jewel-altar') in front of which are several anthropomorphic representations of Lakṣmī, Bhūdevī (the earth-goddess), and other divinities of the Vaiṣṇavite pantheon. The central tank, called Rohiṇīkuṇḍ, is another bathing place believed to grant instant salvation, like the ghāṭs in Banaras or the trivenī confluence near Allahabad.

Apart from its all-India attraction, Puri contains two sectarian complexes of great importance. It is one of the four (eastern) headquarters of the Daśanāmī Order of monks established by Śaṅkarācārya. The last Śaṅkarācārya, Bharatī Krishna Tirtha, was the first pontiff to go abroad in the 1100 year-old history of the Order. He lectured in the United States in 1961 and 1962. Puri was also the site of Śrī

Caitanya's sādhana ('spiritual exercise').<sup>31</sup> As such, the Bengali and Orissan Vaiṣṇavites regard it as the most sacred site in the world, not so much on account of Lord Jagannāth presiding over it, but because of the connection of the place with the life of the founder of their sect.

The temple ritual here is perhaps the most elaborate and exacting of all great shrines. The gods are awakened at 5 a.m. with their first breakfast, vallabhā ('the pleasant one'), which consists of a mixture of water, sugar, and ghī. Throughout the day until 10 p.m., the gods are offered six meals in all, strictly vegetarian, but consisting of a total of eighty ingredients. There is a special kitchen for the preparation of the mahāprasād ('the great prasād,' see above). The food offered to the divinities during the course of the daily ceremonies is then sold to the pilgrims.

The gods are dressed and decked with precious jewels several times during the day. Their bath is administered to them in a unique fashion. The four icons enjoy vicarious ablutions by having water and other purifying agents poured, with appropriate incantations, over their reflections in four large brass vessels. For their siesta between 1 and 2 p.m., and for their night's rest from midnight to 5 a.m., silver beds are placed in front of the images.

Although there are never less than 1,000 pilgrims at Jagannāth-Puri at any time, the number swells to over 1,000,000 in the month of Āṣāḥ (June-July) during the rathayātrā ('procession of the chariot'). This procession has been famous for centuries in India and abroad. About 4,000 people pull the chariot on long ropes, about half of whom are pilgrims. The event is complex: the image of Subhadrā is removed to the 'summer house' at a distance of two miles in a smaller procession that takes place a few days before the main event. When the grand chariot arrives, the Goddess is present to welcome her Lord. Before Jagannāth concludes his 'summer residence,' toward the end of the car-festival, the Goddess is again taken to the main shrine at Puri where she receives Lord Jagannāth when he returns on the grand chariot.

The icons are painted freshly every year. They are 'reinvigorated' (vājīkaraṇa) by a highly-specialized, complex ritual at various time intervals which are determined exclusively by astrological calculations; the shortest span between two 'reinvigoration' is two years; the longest, over a hundred. These vājīkaraṇa events have been recorded in detail since the 14th century, and the ledgers are kept with the head

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31. The term 'sādhana' has become common in the writings and sermons of Hindu teachers after Swami Vivekananda, who use English as their medium. In the copious publications of the Divine Life Society, the Ramakrishna Mission, and other institutions of the Hindu renaissance, 'sādhana' is now much more frequently used than 'spiritual life,' 'exercise,' or other English renditions.

priests of the institution. It is interesting to note that in all other lexical contexts the term *vājīkarana* means a ritual aimed at increasing sexual potency in the male.

## ASSAM

This area is the main extant tantric region on all counts: ritualistic, ideological, and in terms of sanctuary topography.

Kāmakhyā - S - A few miles west of Gauhati is the place where Sañi's vulva descended to earth when Viṣṇu followed the mourning Śiva so that he could dismember Sañi's corpse to make Śiva forget his grief and return to his divine duties. It is one of the main pīṭhas of the tantric tradition, and Śākta Hindus as well as Vajrayāna Buddhists have been worshiping at this place for many centuries. The Kāmakhyā temple that is the center of tantric ritual in Assam belongs to the Goddess manifested as *yonī* (vulva). In lieu of a sculpted image, a slot-like crevice in the rock is worshiped, representing the deity. There are two sacrificial posts (*yūpa*) placed at the two sides of the main gate. Male goats are tied to these every morning to be decapitated toward evening as a daily oblation. Tradition has it that King Naranārāyaṇa, who built the shrine in its present form in the 15th century, had over a hundred men and women entombed as an opening sacrifice to the Goddess. If any human sacrifice (*naramedha*) has taken place at Kāmakhyā at all, there is no evidence that any such has been performed for at least 200 years. At the Bhairavī temple about one hundred yards beneath the main shrine, left-handed tantric ritual is performed at a certain time of the year, albeit clandestinely.

## The Dravidian Area

Technically, the term Dravidian should be used instead of 'South Indian' in order to facilitate clearer communication. For Indians are apt to regard any place 500 miles South of their home as 'South India.' The Biharis and Uttar Pradesh residents, for example, refer to Bombay as 'South India.' The Dravidian area, or the South India to which we have been referring, has its own distinctive style. The South Indian gopuras, the trapezoid temple towers, can be distinguished at once from anything in the North, being the highest parts of the temple and usually visible from afar. Unlike the central shrines in the North, i.e., in the Indo-Aryan language area, the Dravidian sanctum ('womb-house,' *garbhagrha*) is the smallest and lowest building in the center of the temple site. The Dravidian ambulatories are longer and wider, and more highly ornate than their northern counterparts. Architecturally, Southern shrines are no doubt more impressive than Northern temples. However, shrines of national importance are rare in the South. Apart from Rameśvaram and, more recently, Tirupati, there is hardly a place frequented by Northerners.



South Indian ritualistic traditions are more conservative, their execution more detailed, and the average priests more learned than in the North; and due to the fact that their temples are controlled by boards rather than by individual families, there is probably less graft and confusion in their management than in non-Dravidian areas.

Why then does the North have greater religious prestige? It may be due to several reasons. According to brāhmaṇ tradition, the Aryans established their religious institutions along the Ganges and the Himalayas; Sanskrit learning gradually moved from the North to the South. The fact that Dravidian paṇḍitdom easily outranks Sanskrit scholarship of the North today may be due to some sort of cultural overcompensation. The ṛṣis and the classificatory religious charismatic figures were reputed to be fair-complexioned; the Dravidians may feel slightly inferior because of their modally darker complexion. North Indian Hindus who have done a lot of pilgrim-site traveling have told me they would not go to the South where 'even the priests are so dark....'

## MYSORE

Śringerī - S - This maṭha, or monastery, is one of the four headquarters of the Daśanāmī Order of monks founded by Śaṅkarācārya. The other three are in Puri (Orissa), Dvārakā (Gujarat), and Badarikāśram (Kashmir). It is mostly Smārta brāhmaṇs from Mysore, Tamilnad, and Andhra who come to have the darśan of the present Śaṅkarācārya. He usually instructs only Smārta brāhmaṇs, inasmuch as they are already followers of Śaṅkarācārya and believers in monistic or Advaita Vedānta. The Goddess Bhārati, i.e., Sarasvatī, Goddess of wisdom, learning, and music, presides over the temple and is the chief deity of Śringerī.

Belur and Halebid - R - These two beautiful temple sites near the city of Hassan provide an interesting instance of Sanskritization through Westernization. Though the temples were important pilgrim sites during and after the Hoysala dynasty (13th to 15th centuries), they lost their active importance until they were 'rediscovered' by art lovers and tourists as containing some of the most exciting pieces of South Indian sculpture. Similar to the Khajurāho temples of erotic statuary fame, these temples contain the most minute sculpture, erotic and otherwise. The places used to be listed and recommended by tourist guides as the gems of Mysore art, but until 1947 hardly any Hindus went there for religious purposes; those who came were sightseers like the Western tourists. It was only around 1950 that the pratiṣṭhā ('ritualistic activation') of two of the shrines was undertaken. Since then, certain Mysore and some Tamil high-caste people have visited in order to worship.

The Chennakeśava ('beauteous Kṛṣṇa') temple in Belur contains images of Viṣṇu, and the formal worship conducted there follows the traditions of the Pāñcarātra

Vaiṣṇavite sect. The Hoysāleśvara temple in Halebid contains a Śiva-liṅga, and its formal worship follows the Smārta Śaivite sacerdotal traditions.

Śravaṇa Belgolā - R, S - Located about twenty miles from Hassan on the Mysore-Arsikere line, this is the most important Jain sanctuary in South India. It belongs to the Digambara ('heaven-clad,' one-time nude) sect of monks. The attendants today, however, wear white cloth just like the Śvetāmbaras ('white-cloth wearers'). The main image, the famous, 60-foot tall monolith representing Bāhubali-Gomateśvara, a king turned saint, is completely nude, and visible from a large distance. His shrine stands on top of a black basalt mountain. Once every twelfth year, the Mahārāja (now Governor) of Mysore climbs to the top of the image on a scaffold erected for this purpose and conducts the mastakābhiṣekha ('anointment from the forehead'). During this reconsecration large quantities of ghī (clarified butter), rose-water, and other expensive ingredients are poured down the image by the Mahārāja. Local people claim that this periodic oil bath has kept the huge image in good shape for over 900 years.

There are no more than about 2,000 Jain Digambara patrilineal kin-groups in South India who would visit the shrine as their main center of pilgrimage. North Indian (Gujarati and Rajasthani) Jains hardly know of the existence of this marvelous Dravidian shrine. The head officiant informed me in 1956 that no more than 200 'northern' Jain visitors had come to have the darśan of Gomateśvara over the past few years.

As happens at many sectarian shrines in India where the actual members of the sect belong to a regional minority, more than half the pilgrims visiting Śravaṇa Belgolā are Hindus. The most striking trans-denominational phenomenon at this place is a paradox of purpose and perception: the Jains worship Gomateśvara as a Jain charismatic ascetic, one who has shed all wealth and all clothes for austerity's sake. But Hindu women from several castes in the Karnatic region do pilgrimage to Gomateśvara if they are barren. There they have a Hindu priest (not always a brāhmaṇ) apply ghī to the penis of Gomateśvara. This ritual, accompanied by incantations in Kannada and a period of fasting, reportedly causes barren wombs to become fertile.

Uḍipi - S - From Hassan, one can take a bus down the Western Ghats into the coastal area, to reach the headquarters of the pure dualist Vedānta school of Madhavācārya or Anandatīrtha (13th century). Though the shrine was originally a Śaivite sanctuary, no Śaivite or monistic Vedāntin would now set foot at the place, nor would he be welcome. Even the temple elephants wear the nāmam, the vertical line down the forehead that is the sectarian mark of the worshipers of Viṣṇu. The Mādhavite Vaiṣṇavites regard Uḍipi as equal in importance to Mathurā in Uttar Pradesh (Kṛṣṇa's birthplace) and as more sacred than Banaras.

## KERALA

Trivandrum - R - The present capital of the state of Kerala, Trivandrum, contains at its center the temple of Padmanābhasvāmī ('the Lord with the Lotus Navel,' i.e., Viṣṇu). In its ritualistic design this temple is a typical Dravidian shrine. Most Kerala temples, with the exception of Padmanābhasvāmī (which is the private property of the Royal house of Travancore), are controlled by a board of trustees and its administrative delegates. This institution is unique in present-day India, and though not a governmental agency, it has enjoyed considerable cooperation from the State Government at all times.

The Nāyar ruler, the former Mahārāja of Travancore, has supreme ritualistic status at his temple, in spite of the fact that his family is of Śūdra rank in the South Indian system. The priests at this and other Kerala and some Tamil shrines adjacent to Kerala are Nambūdiri brāhmaṇs, the caste of Śaṅkarācārya, the founder of the Daśanāmī Sannyāsins and the spiritual preceptor of all Smārta brāhmaṇs.

Every evening, visitors (almost exclusively local people in spite of the fact that the shrine itself is about four times the size of some of the nationally important temples in the North) participate in the quick-step circumambulation of the corridors that flank the sanctum on four sides. Miniature replicas of the large Padmanābhasvāmī icon are carried around the corridors in the nocturnal pradakṣiṇā (clockwise circumambulation), and temple musicians beat drums and blow the nāgasvāram, the South Indian long oboe.

## MADRAS (TAMILNAD)

Kanyā Kumārī (Cape Comorin) - R - 'Comorin' is the garbled Portuguese version of 'Kumārī.' The virgin goddess, waiting since eternity for her bridegroom Śiva to arrive, presides over one of the loveliest shrines in India -- a small temple perched on the southernmost tip of the subcontinent. The Goddess faces the South, but the southern gate, which used to be the main gate in the old days, is now closed. The story is recounted that ships and their captains were so strongly attracted to the large mukuṭa (crest-jewel) in the Goddess' forehead, that they steered their boats right into the cliff and perished.

Rāmeśvaram (Rameswaram) - A - The name 'Rāmeśvaram' means the 'Lord of Rāma,' i.e., Śiva, whose liṅga was installed on the eastern Dravidian coast by the hero-king Rāma himself as he went to liberate his kidnapped wife Sītā from Rāvaṇa, King of Laṅkā (Ceylon) across the Strait. Rāmeśvaram was the bridgehead for Rāma's and Hanumān's armies' crossing to Ceylon and their ultimate victory. Today the ferry for Ceylon leaves from the nearby Dhanushkodi Pier. There is a belief prevalent among brāhmaṇs of the extreme North and brāhmaṇs of Tamilnāḍ that water taken from the

Ganges at Gangotri, the place of its entry into India, and poured over the liṅga at Rāmeśvaram as an oblation, makes the liṅga grow. This is an interesting link between Gangotri, the northernmost place of pilgrimage, and Rāmeśvaram, the southernmost shrine of all-Indian importance. Phrases like, 'from Rāmeśvaram to Gangotri,' occur in vernacular literature, identifying the cultural links between North and South. The present temple was erected in the 18th century and is one of the most magnificent Dravidian temple structures.

Madurai (Madura) - R - The large, imposing temple of the Goddess Mīnākṣī (the 'fish-eyed') and her consort Lord Sundareśvara (the 'beautiful God'), i.e., Śakti and Śiva, is of purely Dravidian interest. Apart from tourists whose number increases year by year, the temple is rarely visited for religious purposes by North Indians. In size, it is about six times as large as the Viśvanāth Temple at Banaras that the Tamilians themselves recognize as of universal importance. Let us recall that the size of a temple in Hindu India has nothing to do with its importance. In its present form the temple was built by King Tirumal Naik (born 1623). It used to be the center of Bharata Nāṭyam, the classical dance of Tamilnāḍ. Until the mid-twenties, devadāsī women used to perform Bharata Nāṭyam as part of the daily worship on the 'dance-temple' (nāṭyamandir). This was abolished by order of the Madurai municipality.

Tanjore - R - The temple of 'the Huge God,' Bṛhadīśvara Śiva, was built in the 11th century and is one of the more exciting Dravidian structures. The ritual at the shrine is probably the most meticulously executed anywhere. The great Tamilian Śaivite temples are all served by Smārta brāhmaṇs, i.e., followers of Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy. Although all levels of twice-born Hindus visit this site, Smārta visitors have certain prerogatives if they identify themselves: they have direct access to the small space in front of the sanctum (garbhagṛha) and the priests hand them prasāda and firitham (lustral water) first.

Pālṇi - R - This hill is sacred to Subrahmanya, the Tamil name for the war-god Skanda or Kārtikeya, son of Śiva and Śakti, and brother of Gaṇeśa. It is only in Dravidian India that this God has high ritualistic status; depicted with a lance, he is the tutelary deity of many Smārta brāhmaṇs. At Pālṇi, high-caste boys of eleven get their hair shaved as a pre-initiatory rite, in a manner parallel to what occurs in the Punjabī shrine of Jvālāmukhī (see above). Ideally, the hair-shaving ceremony is conducted a year before the investiture with the sacred thread (upanayana).

Cidambaram (Chidambaram) - R, S - One of the five 'element-liṅgas' of the Tamil country is in the district of South Arcot, in Cidambaram. The 'image' being of ether, it is invisible except to the eyes of wisdom. It is an open space in the sanctum (garbhagṛha) surrounded by oil lamps in the form of a liṅga. The temple contains the original statue of Naṭarāja Śiva (the 'King of Dancers'), now sold in various sizes and qualities in oriental art shops around the world. The temple was supposedly



built by a king who had come from Kashmir, and who invited 3,000 priests from Banaras to inaugurate the shrine. When the ceremony was about to begin, only 2,999 priests were present. This annoyed them so much that they refused to begin the ritual. Then Śiva himself appeared and agreed to serve as the 3,000th priest. The descendants of these priests are the Smārta Dikṣitārs, the most highly prestiged among the Smārta brāhmanas. Maṇikavacakar, the famous Śaivite saint, did his sādhanā (spiritual career) at the Golden Hall of Cidambaram, built by King Vīracola (16th century) after he had had a vision of Śiva and Śakti dancing at this spot. Much of the text sung in Bharata Nāṭyam performances centers around this Hall of the 'first among the dancers,' i.e., Śiva himself.

Kāñcipuram (Conjeeveram) - A, R - This site in the district of Chingleput is less than fifty miles south of the city of Madras. In theory, it is an all-India shrine, enumerated as though by courtesy among the 'seven great' as the only South Indian shrine. Some scholars feel that the main reason for the inclusion is euphonic: in the listing of the seven, Kāśī (Banaras) stands first, and Kāñci (Conjeeveram) follows. The Indian poets' love of alliteration (anuprāsa) might have helped elevate Kāñcipuram to an all-India status. Some of the most ancient temples of India are found here. 'Northern' Kāñci (Uttarakāñci), is sacred to Śiva, and the Kailasanātha temple in its present form was built in the 7th century; 'Southern' Kāñci (Dakṣinakāñci), is sacred to Viṣṇu, and its Vaikunṭha Perumal temple is about equally old. In theory, pilgrims should come from all over India, but the overwhelming majority of visitors to Kāñci are from South India. Kāñci is the center of Śaivite Tamilian worship and one of the centers of the Tēngalai (southern) sect of Vaiṣṇava worship in the tradition of Rāmānuja.

Śaṅkarācārya, the founder of institutionalized Advaita-Vedānta, school of philosophy, reportedly 'reinforced' the decaying power of the yantra at the temple of Kāmākṣī in Northern Kāñci (the 'libido-eyed' goddess, Śakti, in one of her three basic forms in the Tamil tradition). Consequently, Kāñci is also the seat of one of the Śaṅkarācāryas or ecclesiastic successors of the original founder.<sup>32</sup>

## ANDHRA

Tirupati - A, S - One of the most important Vaiṣṇavite shrines in the South, and perhaps in the future one of the most outstanding all-India Vaiṣṇavite sites is Tirupati. Highly endowed by Gujarati merchants, the prasāda given at the main shrine now costs Rs. 50 (about \$7), and is thus the most expensive prasāda in India. The Sanskritization process of the Hindu renaissance has no doubt helped to enhance the status of Tirupati during the past five decades. A university (Veṅkaṭeśvara University)

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32. This was the pontifex interviewed by Arthur Koestler in his Lotus and the Robot.

was built there in the 1950's, and there has been a movement to make Tirupati the capital of the Telugu-speaking State of Andhra. The temple kitchen is quite cosmopolitan-vegetarian: there are Uḍipī brāhmaṇ cooks from the Mysore area, Iyengar Vaiṣṇavite cooks from the Andhra and Tamil regions, and Gujarati cooks from far-off Bombay State to serve the regional needs of the pilgrims. The marriage of Tirupati (i.e., Viṣṇu, the Lord of Lakṣmī) to the Goddess Padmāvatī (Lakṣmī) is the most important annual festival. In 1965 it was visited by 120,000 pilgrims, one-third of whom were reported to be from non-Dravidian areas.

Conclusion - The number and importance of pilgrimage sites have varied over the years, with some sites rising in importance and popularity, and others falling into disuse. New meanings have been added to old sites, and the ubiquitous impact of the Great Tradition and Sanskritization have pushed many one-time only regionally important shrines into all-Indian importance.

With the rise of literacy and the spread of railways and mass communications, one can predict that pilgrimage sites and processes are going to become increasingly important links in Hindu civilization.

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CHAPTER IV

CLASSICAL INDIAN PHILOSOPHY - Part I

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# CLASSICAL INDIAN PHILOSOPHY - Part I

Richard H. Robinson

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## CLASSICAL INDIAN PHILOSOPHY - Part I

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### 1. Introduction

#### A. Why Study Indian Philosophy?

The classical period of Indian philosophy begins with the composition of systematic treatises (śāstra) which are attributed to specific human authors. Some of these writers were famed as holy men, and some were not. Their treatises were esteemed primarily for sound doctrine and cogent argument, and only secondarily for the personal qualities of the writer. And though most of the schools in one way or another affirmed the authority of Scripture, two thousand years ago marked the advance of Indian civilization as a whole to greater faith in man's powers of observation and reason. The intellectual elite would accept an idea even if its author admitted to inventing it rather than receiving it through revelation or tradition.

A śāstra usually opens with a statement of its purpose and of the uses of its subject matter. It is worthwhile to follow that practice here, inasmuch as the majority of educated Westerners today either do not accept the value of studying Indian philosophy, or accept it for invalid reasons. On the one extreme are those parochial Western philosophers who belie their own credentials to teach the art of thinking by discounting without due examination one of the world's three great primary philosophical traditions. At the other extreme are those uncritical enthusiasts for the mystic wisdom of the Timeless East who search out only what confirms their European romantic bias for the opaque and intuitive over against the clear and the rational, ignoring the drive towards clarity, order and rationality that dominates the śāstra tradition.

An obvious advantage of this study is safeguarding oneself against abuse by authorities on the subject. But the question remains: Why should the educated man who is neither an ignorant detractor nor a blind advocate concern himself with Indian philosophy? If he is not interested in either philosophy or India and is willing to refrain from discussing both subjects, there is no reason why he should become informed. But if he ventures an opinion on the problems of present-day India or the character of Indian civilization, he must directly or indirectly make certain judgments on the major pure intellectual achievements of that civilization. If he wishes to understand the arts and sciences of ancient India, or its literature, he will need

to know the philosophies which provided much of form and content to the rest of the culture.

In the past, European imperialists adduced opinions on Indian philosophy to show that India was inferior to the West, and Indian nationalists interpreted the same data to show that India was at least equal to the West. Neither side in this debate exemplified the philosophical brilliance that it claimed for its tradition. Most of the arguments are riddled with the sort of fallacy usual in apologetic--gerrymandering of the criteria, arbitrary selection and rejection of facts, overgeneralization, failure to discriminate, and sheer, downright misrepresentation. Nonetheless, a study of Indian philosophy is one antidote to the smug provincialism from which the West has not yet purged itself. Whether Vasubandhu or Aristotle deserves more the title 'master of those who know',<sup>1</sup> whether Rāmānuja or Aquinas is the better theologian, the Indian thinkers display a grandeur of scope, rigor of argument and inventive genius that command admiration in their own right as well as in comparison.

Studying Indian philosophy is therapeutic in that it tends to free the Europophile from the idea that the Greek heritage comprises the only genuine philosophy, and the Indophile from idolatry towards the great masters of the Indian past.<sup>2</sup> This therapy, though, is not merely a personal comfort but facilitates creative renewal. In Max Müller's grandiloquent words, "If I were to ask myself from what literature we here in Europe...may draw that corrective which is most wanted, in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, ...again, I should point to India."<sup>3</sup> On the Indian side, Radhakrishnan says, "A study of Indian philosophy will conduce to...the adopting of a more balanced outlook and the freeing of the mind from the oppressing sense of the perfection of everything that is ancient. This freedom from bondage to authority is an ideal worth striving at. For when the enslaved intellect is freed, original thinking and creative effort might again be possible."<sup>4</sup>

The history of philosophy shows that the subject has advanced as much by re-examining its own past as by confronting new knowledge in other fields. For the Western student of philosophy, the Indian tradition offers something of each. Its scientific base is quite different from that of classical European philosophy--linguistics and psychology rather than mathematics and physics--and yet it shares many of the same problems and even many of the same arguments. It is similar enough to be comparable, and sufficiently different to show the Western tradition in a new

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1. Dante, Inferno, 4.131.
  2. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, London: Allen and Unwin, 1923, (2 vols.), vol. 1, p. 55.
  3. Ibid., p. 55, n. 1.
  4. Ibid., p. 55.

perspective. Comparative philosophy is still in its infancy, but already shows initial promise of revealing more adequately the nature of philosophy, deepening our understanding of its possibilities and limitations, and enriching the world-wide tradition. Even without giving rein to heady optimism, we may happily envisage the prospect that critical assessment will resolve the difficulties on which the Indian tradition has been hung up since the Middle Ages, and will again render it viable.

Those who come to Indian philosophy ingenuously Looking For Truth are a bit like Boccaccio's naive girl who went out into the desert to look for God.<sup>5</sup> Śāṅkara says that the careful arguments of clever men are shown by even cleverer men to be fallacious, so that one cannot accept mere reasoning as well grounded.<sup>6</sup> And Radhakrishnan boldly asserts, "If the sophisms which ruined the philosophies of the past are any reason for neglecting them, then not only the study of Indian philosophy but of all philosophy should be given up."<sup>7</sup> The classical philosophers stated that their goal was certainty, and yet it can easily be shown that they did not attain it. We must agree with Śāṅkara that reason alone does not furnish final certainty, and we know through scientific textual criticism that--insofar as man can know anything for certain--the scriptures on which Śāṅkara depended for certainty are the products not of revelation but of fallible human inspiration.

Nevertheless, the Indian philosophies do impart truth in their own peculiar way. Each of them affords a fairly coherent pattern within which facts of experience are ordered and rendered intelligible. These systems are not fully commensurate with each other, let alone with modern world-views, so it is difficult to translate their 'truths' out of the particular system within which they are apprehended. Nowadays we have learned too much about how understanding depends on arbitrary conventions such as definitions and axioms, for us to believe that any truth is absolutely self-evident. Every true proposition is true only within its proper frame of reference, and it does not follow that the sophisticated and exceedingly intricate structures of modern science are the only matrices within which truths can be plotted. All modern cultures continue to use non-scientific truth-frames for vital matters such as religion, love and art. The Indian philosophies are in their diverse ways quite effective life-philosophies. In order to profit from the intellectual exercise of manipulating a pre-modern system, whether it be Neo-Platonism, Thomism or Vedānta, you need not subscribe to its absolute claims. It is like assenting to the make-believe of opera or ballet; voluntary participation in the illusion rewards you with a perception

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5. Giovanni Boccaccio, Decameron, Third Day, Tenth Story. New York: Modern Library, 1955, p. 211ff.

6. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, A Source Book in Indian Philosophy, Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1957, p. 524.

7. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. 1, p. 54.

of reality that you could not have obtained otherwise.

### B. Some Claims and Charges

The śāstra-writer, having introduced his subject, proceeds to consider objections and to dispose of them before going on to his own exposition. This, then, is the point at which to entertain some charges against Indian philosophy, and some claims on its behalf that are simply the charges turned inside out. Most of these opinions suffer from the defects of apologetic mentioned above. But they require consideration because they are widespread beliefs, inculcated by famous writers and endemic in folk attitudes towards India.

It is often alleged that Indian philosophy is mere wisdom literature and not properly philosophy at all, that it is not rational but merely didactic. This misconception results from the nineteenth-century European fondness for proverbs and moral adages. The Dhammapada and the Bhagavad Gītā were translated dozens of times and printed in popular series, while the general public was seldom exposed to the classical philosophers. One might, of course, argue that if Emerson and Nietzsche are included in philosophy, then practically nothing in the religious literature of ancient India except ritual can be excluded.

Indian philosophy is usually characterized as religious. This is true, with the qualification that some Indian systems are no more religious than Aristotle, and less so than Sartre. But it is alleged further that Indian philosophy is entirely mystical and religious, that India, furthermore, is spiritual while the West is materialist. If the claimant is pro-Indian, he approves of the spiritual and deplors materialism. If he is anti-Indian, he proceeds to blame Hinduism and Buddhism for India's failure to invent gunpowder and the internal combustion engine, and then insists that the multitudes of Indians studying philosophy (a factual error) should be diverted to subjects such as agriculture and engineering that have made the speaker and his country the shining examples that they are.

Classical Indian philosophy deals with the whole ladder of being, from atoms through the animate kingdom up to the transcendental. The Indian Materialist schools were atheistic, denied the soul, and decried all religious activity as vain. Most of the philosophical systems shared to some extent the concerns of the secular scientists --the grammarians, the estheticians, the physicians, the erotic theorists, the astronomers, the experts in statecraft, the logicians. The literature of the philosophies, even those which purport to lead to nirvāṇa, devotes much space to the composition and character of this world, the domain of the sciences.

It is often asserted that Indian philosophy never indulged in mere disinterested inquiry but was always tied closely to spiritual utility. Whether this assertion is praise or blame is not always clear. Edgerton says,



Philosophy in India has always been practical in its motive. And its practical motive has been what we should call religious.... If it seeks the truth, it is not for the sake of the truth as an abstract end in itself; it is for the sake of the salvation which that truth is believed to bring with it.<sup>8</sup>

Conze says,

Philosophy, as we understand it in Europe, is a creation of the Greeks. It is unknown to Buddhist tradition, which would regard the enquiry into reality, for the mere purpose of knowing more about it, as a waste of valuable time. The Buddha's teaching is exclusively concerned with showing the way to salvation. Any 'philosophy' there may be in the works of Buddhist authors is quite incidental.<sup>9</sup>

Chandradhar Sharma agrees that:

Western philosophy has remained more or less true to the etymological meaning of 'philosophy', in being essentially an intellectual quest for truth. Indian Philosophy has been however, intensely spiritual and has always emphasized the need of practical realization of truth.<sup>10</sup>

With such friends, Indian philosophy needs no enemies. It is needless to quote what its detractors have said. For a lively example, see Walter Kaufmann's comments on Buddhism and truth.<sup>11</sup> The point at issue is whether the search for intellectual truth is self-validating. It is a companion to the thesis that art is self-validating-- 'art for art's sake'--that became current in the late nineteenth century when the fragmentation of Western culture was accelerating and its components were asserting their autonomy. Since Plato, however, the Western tradition has pursued as its summum bonum not merely the true but the good and the beautiful. The three have remained linked and have continually blended and interacted, not only in the general culture but especially in philosophy. What justifies the practice of philosophy is itself a philosophical problem, to which the Western and the Indian traditions have

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8. Franklin Edgerton, "The Meaning of Sāṅkhya and Yoga," American Journal of Philology, XLV, 1 (1924), p. 1.

9. Edward Conze, Buddhism: Its Essence and Development, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959, (original publication 1951), p. 15.

10. Chandradhar Sharma, Indian Philosophy: A Critical Survey, New York: Barnes and Noble, University Paperbacks, 1962 (original edition 1952), p. 1.

11. Walter Kaufmann, Critique of Religion and Philosophy, Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1961, pp. 261-267.

each given diverse answers. The most widely favored solution is that knowledge is to be sought because it leads to happiness. Philosophers are of course not agreed as to what happiness is, whether it is the beatific vision of God or satisfaction of biological need, whether it is the free exercise in this world of man's natural powers or liberation from the round of transmigration. But thinkers of East and West have been remarkably unanimous that thinking is one of the highways to happiness.

Most of the classical Indian schools maintained that their teaching leads effectively to liberation (mokṣa) from transmigration, and declared this goal to be man's highest end. It is surpassingly curious that autonomous systems like the classical Sāṅkhya world-schema, the Nyāya logic and the Vaiśeṣika physics should have been put forward as roads to mokṣa. The estheticians, moreover, claimed that the experience of beauty is conducive to mokṣa, and even Vātsyāyana, writing on kāma (eros, a goal, somewhat more popular than mokṣa), claimed that he composed

according to the precepts of Holy Writ, for the benefit of the world, while leading the life of a religious student, and wholly engaged in the contemplation of the Deity.<sup>12</sup>

Such extreme use of the spiritual pose ought to excite suspicion. It is just one step further to the Jou-p'u-t'uan ('Prayer-mat of Flesh'), a Chinese pornographic novel that begins with a Buddhist meditation master telling a brilliant young candidate that he will become a great saint after and only after he has worked off his karma for lechery. Many pages and escapades later, the mature rake returns to the master and quickly achieves mokṣa.<sup>13</sup>

We are dealing here with formulas of legitimation, ostensible reasons for an activity that have to be distinguished from the real purposes. One has only to consider the range of learned and beneficial activities supported under the National Defence Education Act to realize that 'defence' in our time is as broad an umbrella of legitimation and as munificent a wishing-cow as 'liberation' was in classical India. Public goals change, and even while they are not yet deposed their status may be more formal than real. The subsidiary pursuits that they generated in their youth grow up and become virtually independent. Crises pass and values change, but old goals retain ceremonial honor because they are ready to hand.

Anthropologists regularly distinguish the function of an activity from the reasons which those who do it give for doing it. Indian philosophy should be so examined,

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12. The Kāma Sūtra of Vātsyāyana, transl. by Richard F. Burton, New York: Dutton, 1962, p. 252.

13. Li Yu, Jou Pu Tuan (The Prayer Mat of Flesh) New York: Grove Press, 1963.

India, but an act that invokes the magic efficacy of truth.<sup>18</sup> In general, the Indian philosophers, including the Buddha, have taken noticeable pains to tell the truth, to entertain the views of their opponents and judge them fairly, to speak not so much to persuade the hearer as to show him, and to beware of misleading statements. Since philosophy and theology were not separate in India, the comparatively high degree of intellectual honesty is all the more impressive.

One of the common Indian philosophical axioms is that everything that exists must have a limit, that to exist means to be limited by some limiter. But what limits the limiter? If we posit a limiter of the limiter, then what in turn limits it? A vicious infinite regress ensues. To avoid this predicament, each system posits an unlimited limiter. In general, they find it most economical and beautiful to have just one such limiter. This is the structural role of mokṣa. It is the principle of non-system that upholds the system. But for it, all things would lack a foundation.

Propositional truths must be about existing things, that are limited. Consequently, propositions cannot be ultimate; they must be limited by a limiter. This limiter, for the transcendentalist schools (Buddhism and Vedānta) is the ultimate experience, 'enlightenment' or 'realization'. True statements are first contained in and guaranteed by experience, then subsumed in and cancelled by it. But 'realization' (= mokṣa) is the limit, a far-off point that most people never reach and are not overly distressed about not reaching. Between here and there stretches the domain of expressional truth, with which Indian philosophers are in fact chiefly concerned.

The common charge that Indian philosophy is pessimism stems partly from a failure to distinguish the road from the goal, the world of transmigration, within which one philosophizes and lives, from mokṣa that limits, supports and validates this world. The heart of this charge is that Indian thought denies value to this world. Schweitzer states the case lucidly:

Indian thought in its very nature is so entirely different from our own because of the great part which the idea of what is called world and life negation plays in it....World and life negation ...consists in [man's] regarding existence as he experiences it in himself and as it is developed in the world as something meaningless and sorrowful, and he resolves accordingly (a) to bring life to a standstill in himself by mortifying his will-to-live, and (b) to renounce all activity which aims at improvement of the conditions of life in this world.<sup>19</sup>

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18. See W. Norman Brown, "The Basis for the Hindu Act of Truth," Review of Religion, 5 (1940), pp. 36-45.

19. Albert Schweitzer, Indian Thought and its Development, Boston: Beacon Paperback, 1957 (original publication 1936), pp. 1-2. Also see S. Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, New York: Galaxy Books, 1959 (original publication 1939), pp. 64-114, for a trenchant Hindu critique of Schweitzer.

to see what in fact Indians have done and are still doing with the classical systems. The physicians used Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika proto-science as a foundation for medical theory. The estheticians used the philosophical psychologies to explain why literature, dance and drama function the way they do, and so to give art a scientific basis. The social theorists used philosophical concepts such as the guṇa theory and transmigration to rationalize the orthodox model of society. Kings, courtiers and commoners treated debates between philosophers as intellectual entertainment, the game being made more piquant by rich prizes for the winners and heavy forfeits for the losers. Cultured men studied philosophy because it was a mark of good education and because it gratified the intellect. Kālidāsa's acquaintances would have appreciated the Athenians' quandary, "Shall we call in the girls, or talk philosophy?"<sup>14</sup> Men frustrated in their careers find solace in philosophy, just as Boethius did.<sup>15</sup> Few indeed have ever claimed to find mokṣa through the teachings of the darśanas. But the intellectual contemplation of a world-picture comprising a road to mokṣa ranks along with devotion to God, music, poetry, kāma, hashish, astrology and liquor, all of which have served to palliate the woes of life and to increase the pleasure of millions.

It is true, nonetheless, that professional yogins (practitioners of yoga) utilize some parts of traditional philosophy either to attain or to explain trances and paranormal powers. This enterprise is not quite so spiritual as one might think. Present-day yogins are extremely interested in the body, in health, diet and healing. They strive to develop super-sensory perception and sundry powers over matter that differ in method but not in goal from the wholly materialist fantasies of science fiction. They tend to have little relish for the intellectual problems that absorbed the classical philosophers. Conversely, most accomplished modern pundits are not yogic adepts.

Kaufmann<sup>16</sup> charges that the Buddha made truth subservient to a climactic experience, and asserts that unlike the true philosopher, the Buddhist's ultimate concern is not with truth. The first assertion is true, and the second is meaningless except in terms of Kaufmann's own dichotomy between truth and experience,<sup>17</sup> that the Buddha seems not to have maintained. Indeed, for Buddhists and Vedāntins true statements are merely signposts on the road to confirmatory experience. But truthfulness as a virtue is at once an indispensable means to liberation and a quality that the liberated one perfectly exemplifies. Truth-speaking was not merely a worldly virtue in ancient

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14. Plato, The Symposium, Collected Dialogues, New York: Pantheon Books, 1961, p. 531.

15. Boethius (c. 480-524), Roman philosopher and statesman, composed The Consolation of Philosophy while in prison awaiting execution.

16. op. cit., p. 267.

17. op. cit., pp. 62-78, for Kaufmann's idea of truth.



All serious inquiry starts from discontent with appearances and well-grounded mistrust of 'existence as he experiences it in himself'. Thus every philosopher rejects a certain kind of world and a certain kind of life. The mokṣa philosophers all agree that existence is suffering, but none of them concludes that it is meaningless. They affirm that life has a goal which transcends life, but uniformly maintain that the goal is to be reached only by travelling the road, that one cannot simply cut out of life. They hold that worldly happiness is preferable to worldly suffering, but that it is inferior to absolute happiness. Since everything that exists is imperfect, perfect happiness must be located outside of existence.

Here we meet again the concept of the unlimited limiter, the foundation that has no foundation, the goal that defines the road. This principle is posited to avoid the embarrassing consequences of admitting an infinite regress. The Western tradition for long maintained that God must exist because there must be an unmoved mover to account for the existence of motion. Christian apologetic still contends that life has no meaning, or morality has no validity, or history has no purpose, unless God provides them. What is not self-validated must either be invalid or be validated by another. The form of the argument is: 'If X has Y, it must either have given it to itself, or must have obtained it from non-X. It is absurd for a thing to give itself something unless it has it to give. But if it has it to give, it cannot give it to itself, because you cannot give a man something that he already has. We know that X has Y. Therefore X must have obtained Y from non-X.'

The Indian philosophies do not maintain that life and world have value solely because they lead to mokṣa, but they deny that anything has absolute value save insofar as it pertains to an absolute goal. Mundane good is finite but legitimate, equivocally a stumbling block or a stepping stone to higher things. There is a ladder of ascending goods, all allowable but not all equal or compatible. The ascent runs through a series of decision points where one must choose between the more pleasant and the more virtuous. The more pleasant, the familiar, is a dead end, while the better, the novel, is the way up.<sup>20</sup> This is the pattern of transcendence in all life, and any decent philosophy has to express it.

There is no denying that the mokṣa philosophies are ascetic. But in none of them is asceticism categorical and absolute. Unlike Western puritans, ancient Indian ascetics did not advocate laws to force abstention on everyone. Asceticism was a free option. The senses were considered vicious because sense-desires battered on sense-objects and became insatiable. Alternatively, jaded sensualists turned from sense-desires precisely because they became satiated and there was nowhere else to turn. The case for asceticism

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20. Kāṭha Upaniṣad, 1.2.1-3. S. Radhakrishnan: The Principal Upaniṣads, p. 607-608. London: Allen and Unwin, 1953. Hereafter all page references for Upaniṣads are to Radhakrishnan.

was that there must be something to set bounds to desires. This is quite true and perfectly reasonable. All culture requires discipline. Whether one must affirm the possibility of ultimately eradicating desires in order to control them sufficiently in normal life, is quite another matter. The mokṣa philosophers were unwilling to admit that man is finite. In this respect they were man-centered but anti-humanistic. They held that mundane desires were infinite, and so discounted the alternative of satisfying them, advocating instead that they be eradicated. The desire for liberation was good, of course, but it was self-liquidating; when it was fulfilled, it would vanish. The trouble with ordinary desires was said to be that they required repeated satisfaction, that they could not be appeased once and for all. To be valuable and real was to be permanent. Thus those philosophers tended to devalue changing phenomena except insofar as they relate to constant principles.

Śaṅkara lays down four prerequisites for Vedānta-study, namely discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal; renunciation of desire for reward here or hereafter; tranquillity, self-restraint, detachment from ritual, patience, concentration and faith; and desire for mokṣa.<sup>21</sup> The first three can easily be restated in modern humanist terms. The good student should be able to tell the constants from the variables, should be able to separate the principles from the data. He ought to be disinterested in rewards other than the satisfaction of mastering the subject; understanding should be an end and not merely a means. And he should be personally mature, calm and steady, disciplined, not compulsively attached to all sorts of activities that will interfere with his studies, patient and longsuffering, with good powers of sustained concentration, and with confidence that study and its goal are worthwhile. The fourth prerequisite, desire for mokṣa, is warranted by the special objective of the activity, which is to know Brahman (the Absolute). It is comparable to requiring that a student be interested in mathematics before he studies it.

Most of the other darśanas (systems of philosophy) do not state these prerequisites, but nonetheless assume them. This has given rise to the claim that Indian philosophy is practical, intensely spiritual, always emphasizing the need for practical realization of truth. To the extent that this claim is true, it does not distinguish Indian from Western philosophy. No Western esthetician would expect a student to make headway in the subject without having considerable experience with art. The study of epistemology requires not just speculation but observation. Indian philosophers, though, conceived theories about atoms yet made no attempt to verify their existence experimentally, speculated about human physiology but seem never to have dissected a corpse or vivisected an animal to check their theories, and accepted speculative geography and cosmology without bothering to take exact measurements. Evidently 'practical realization' did not comprise empirical verification by observation. This is anything but practical.

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21. See Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. 1, pp. 45-46, for the paraphrase of a modern Hindu humanist.

What is so uniquely spiritual about Indian philosophy? That Śaṅkara sets some moral prerequisites for Vedānta-study? Western primary education recognizes that intellectual learning requires certain moral qualities. Schoolchildren are graded not only for learning but for being tranquil, disciplined, altruistic, patient, concentrated and consenting to be taught (= having faith). The adult philosopher takes these qualities for granted in himself and his colleagues. He generally does not seek salvation through his philosophizing, but the passion for truth that avowedly or covertly he is supposed to have is at least as disinterested, spiritual and mystical as the desire for mokṣa.

The phrase 'practical realization' is vague and ambiguous, but it evidently means a) following a regimen of conduct and yogic practice in conjunction with philosophical study, and b) deeply contemplating philosophical propositions so that they alter one's character and mode of being. The latter practice is usual among students of Western philosophy, though most do not feel that it is necessary to sit or breathe in a certain way or to go into a trance in order to perform intellectual contemplation. To the Indophile claim they reply that "Some mystics are unpoetic souls who require special exercises and an eventual trance to see anything but the everyday world."<sup>22</sup>

Ascetic observances figure largely in primitive quests for vision. The seeker fasts, remains continent, goes without sleep, stays in an uncomfortable posture, keeps silent, wears uncomfortable clothes, endures extremes of heat or cold, and thus attempts to force open the doors of perception. He also, of course, furthers 'practical realization' by eating sacred mushrooms or smoking marijuana. There is no doubt whatsoever that such practices (not just the drugs) induce trances, and that a disciplined mind can make discoveries in trance that it would not have made otherwise. But the Indian philosophers do not claim that a teaching is true because it has been discovered by a man in a trance. They were too familiar with trances to ignore that many samādhis (cognitive trances) are false, and that being 'high' is no guarantee that one is right.

The practice of deliberately entering trances is widespread in India and quite rare in the modern West. Consequently, "the criticism that Western metaphysics is one-sided, since its attention is confined to the waking state alone, is not without its force."<sup>23</sup> Radhakrishnan continues, "There are other states of consciousness as much entitled to consideration as the waking.... The whole truth must take all the modes of consciousness into account."

There is no Sanskrit word for 'spiritual', but in modern Indian usage the English

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22. Walter Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 318.

23. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. 1, p. 28.

word always connotes, among other things, yogic trance. When Indians say that the West is materialist, they often have in mind the well-attested antipathy of most Westerners towards all states of mind other than 'normal' waking consciousness. The great British Orientalist T. W. Rhys-Davids wrote in 1886:

Samādhi on the other hand was, at least among later Buddhists, a self-induced mesmeric trance, supposed to be a proof of superior holiness. It seems almost incredible that such a trance should be possible, but its occurrence has been well authenticated in modern times. Buddhism, it thus appears, has not been able to escape from the natural result of the wonder with which abnormal nervous states have always been regarded during the infancy of science. It has mistaken the temporary cessation of the outward signs of life for an actual victory of mind over matter, and has regarded the loss of mental power as the highest form of mental activity. But it must be added, to its credit, that the most ancient Buddhism despises dreams and visions.<sup>24</sup>

He adds in a footnote:

For an actual instance of Indian ascetics having voluntarily entered into a lasting trance resembling the hibernation of bears and other animals, see Dr. Carpenter's interesting paper...

This was written just a year or so after Freud had begun to experiment with hypnosis in treating hysteria, and fourteen years before he published The Interpretation of Dreams. Psychoanalytic research has illuminated the repressive mechanisms and fears of psychic disintegration that alienate the conscious from the unconscious and make the ego hostile to states that it feels unable to control. Rhys-Davids' paragraph admirably arrays the usual rationalizations. Samādhi is bad because:

a) It is an abnormal nervous state. Freud did not help matters by his almost exclusive concern with clinical abnormalities, and he seems to have shared Rhys-Davids' prejudice. Jung has since done much to counteract this notion of what is normal, by examining the features common to yoga and psychotherapy, and by investigating not only the psychopathology but the yoga of everyday life.

b) It represents a cessation of outward signs of life. This prejudice is undoubtedly complex in origin. One element is the outward resemblance between deep trance

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24. T. W. Rhys-Davids, Buddhism, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1886, pp. 176-177.



and death, that activates the observer's fear of death. Another motive is simply aversion to the unfamiliar, the strange and the alien. Non-intellectuals have much the same sort of antipathy to intellectual absorption that in its own degree represents a cessation of outward activity. A third factor is that such a trance state appears difficult to attain, and hence engenders psychic resistance of a kind that is commonplace in psychoanalysis. The put-down is an evasive maneuver towards something at once desired and feared.

c) It is a loss of mental power. This charge is based chiefly on the observation that men in trance do not speak, or that ecstatic enthusiasts babble incoherently. In yogic trances the interior monolog is stilled and one does not verbalize. Thus the mind is not using (though it has not 'lost') one of its powers. One might as well call waking up a loss of mental power, since the waker stops dreaming; he temporarily 'loses' the ability to dream. Other mental powers come into play in trance. The mind becomes much more plastic and suggestible, esthetic sensibilities and perception of pattern are heightened in the lower trances when the experiencer is not confused or frightened by the state, and all sorts of awarenesses emerge that are jammed by the incessant verbalization of the ordinary waking state.

Psychopathology abounds in cases of automatism, ecstatic trances where "the guidance and control of the higher centers of consciousness were removed."<sup>25</sup> This is the condemnation implicit in Rhys-Davids' 'self-induced mesmeric trance'; hypnotic states involve suspension of normal volition. In his day, the will was still something good, something to be strengthened and never to be suspended. Freud was just discovering how to use hypnosis to by-pass the strong will and repair the damage it had wreaked on the psyche. Yogic trance, though, is not to be confused with automatism or possession by impersonal forces. It is entered voluntarily, and the yogin learns to control the process, to choose which kind of trance he will enter and how long he will stay in it.

Another common ground for fearing samādhi is the suspicion that it may prove too enjoyable. This is a justified fear. Buddhist texts warn the bodhisattva not to flee from the suffering of the ordinary world, and not to become addicted to the pleasures of meditation. For this reason, people who have not developed mature moral habits and a sound philosophy should not enter the trance-states.

One may grant that yogic experience is not pathological, and that modern Western aversion to it springs from a sort of prudery, and yet may still ask, 'What does this have to do with philosophy? Is it necessary to go into a trance to understand the Indian darśanas?' Some darśanas, such as Sāṅkhya and Mīmāṃsā, make

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25. C. H. Dodd, The Authority of the Bible, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958 (original publication 1929), p. 67.

no mention of samādhi, and evidently set no store by it. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika does not acknowledge a distinction between ordinary truth and transcendental truth, so samādhi is not necessary for understanding. Buddhists and Advaita-Vedāntins hold that their propositions are only understood in the highest sense when they have been 'realized' in samādhi, but they grant that there is a kind of valid understanding of these doctrines on the ordinary level.

The same would no doubt be true for Plato or Wittgenstein. They would appear more meaningful, new depths would be revealed, if one contemplated them in a state of paranormal receptivity and intense concentration. But more than this is intended. Several Indian philosophies describe how the world looks to someone in samādhi. You can only vaguely imagine that scene and cannot verify the description until you have the experience.

The Indian schools debated the vexed problem of the authority of yogic experience, and of telling the authentic from the false. It was generally conceded that claims to yogic experience were not self-validating, and that such experience could not verify any proposition until it had itself been verified by another verifier (pramāṇa).

Christian critics commonly accuse Indian religions of being unethical, and Indian philosophy of neglecting ethics. The partisan motives behind the charge are transparent. But there are also some reasons. For one thing, Indian ethical codes are different to some extent from those of nineteenth-century European Christianity; they struck rigid outsiders as simply unethical. More deeply, the practice of yoga and the widespread tolerance of paranormal experience disturbed Christians for whom any departure from 'normal' consciousness was a surrender of the will. Victorian ethical behavior, that does not look so good in retrospect or in the eyes of Indian observers,<sup>26</sup> was a matter of 'strong character', i.e., aggressive will-assertion. People who did not maintain a firm will at all times obviously could not be ethical.

The classical darśanas certainly acknowledge the need to observe moral rules. Mīmāṃsā devotes most of its concern to religious duty (dharma), the Buddhist śāstras discuss not only the rules but the casuistry by which they are to be related to particular cases, and the philosophical sections of the Mahābhārata attempt to set up an ethical calculus, harmonizing utilitarian and revealed principles. The critic can find fault with Indian ethical theory, but he cannot rightly deny its existence and importance.

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26. See Nirad C. Chaudhuri, The Continent of Circe, London: Chatto and Windus, 1965, pp. 120-131.

Schweitzer expresses the common charge that Indian thought is unethical to the extent that it devalues this life and this world. He asserts that ethics demands of man that he interest himself in the world, and that consequently world-and-life negation undoes itself and gives way to world-and-life affirmation if it succumbs to the temptation to engage in ethics.<sup>27</sup> This is not a necessary truth but simply a clearly stated prejudice. The ethic of abstention is no less ethical than that of performance. Indian thought has not been "compelled to make concessions to world and life affirmation".<sup>28</sup> Life-affirmation and life-negation are Schweitzer's categories, not those of the Indian darśanas. He gerrymanders the definition, saying "He who sacrifices his life to achieve any purpose for an individual or for humanity is practising life affirmation." This enables him to charge Indian thought with being untrue to itself whenever it shows concern with what he calls ethics. He goes on to declare that "World and life negation is only present when man takes no interest whatever in any realisable purpose nor in the improvement of conditions in this world."<sup>29</sup> In other words, only total alienation constitutes world and life negation. But in fact, total alienation was neither advocated nor practiced by the great philosophers of ancient India. The self-contradiction lies not in their philosophy but in Schweitzer's.

Modern Indian writers have contributed largely to such misunderstandings as Schweitzer's by their insistence that monistic idealism is the quintessence of Indian thought.<sup>30</sup> Idealism has been out of fashion in Anglo-American philosophy for fifty years. Nobody in the West pays much attention to Bradley, who is still widely studied and admired in India, and through whom German idealism has overlaid the Indian tradition and stimulated a pervasive misinterpretation. Indians have often written in the mistaken belief that Europeans would respect Śāṅkara more if he were likened to Hegel and Bradley. But Indian philosophy is neither dominantly monistic nor chiefly idealist. About two-thirds of the major classical schools are realist and pluralist. It will not do to say: "[Monistic idealism] is the highest truth revealed in India. Even systems which announce themselves as dualistic or pluralistic seem to be permeated by a strongly monistic character."<sup>31</sup> By the time a definition has been stretched so as to include its opposite, it is meaningless.

Mahāyāna Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta are māyāvāda - they say that the world is an illusion, and they insist especially that all duality (differentiation) is māyā. Thus these schools are monistic in that they are non-dualist. One Mahāyāna school, Viṣṇūnavāda, asserts that everything is thought-only (cittamātra), and can be described roughly as idealism. The other Mahāyāna school (Mādhyamika) and Advaita Vedānta

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27. op. cit., pp. 8, 9.

28. op. cit., p. 7.

29. op. cit., pp. 6, 7.

30. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, p. 30-41.

31. Ibid., p. 31-32.

do not accept this view and cannot really be called idealisms.

Schweitzer assumes that ethical activism correlates with metaphysical realism, and ethical quietism with ontological idealism. No part of this correlation is confirmed by the Indian pattern. There are self-centered, quietist realisms (Sāṅkhya and Yoga, Vaiśeṣika) and altruistic, activist ones (Sarvāstivāda Buddhism, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Jainism). There are no māyāvādins who do not advocate zealous action for the benefit of the world. The correlate of active altruism is not realism, but devotion (bhakti). This is hardly surprising, since the essence of devotion is intense and loving concentration on an adorable Other. The noun 'bhakti', incidentally, derives from the verb 'bhaj' ('to share, to participate'). Some devotionists hold that the world is real, and some that it is illusory. It has often been objected that if self and other are not really different, then devotion is unfounded, that self-love is not really devotion. The objection holds only on realist assumptions that the māyāvādins do not accept.

Advaita Vedānta has dominated Indian philosophy since the late classical period. Since Advaitins take seriously the Upaniṣadic saying that "He goes from death to death who sees anything like diversity here",<sup>32</sup> they have spared no pains to explain away the manifest diversity of Indian philosophy. Śaṅkara's approach to unity was straightforward and honest. He considered the Buddhists, Jains, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya-Yoga fundamentally wrong, and refuted them to the best of his ability. There was one true darśana (system), his own school of Vedānta. The classical darśanas in general maintained their own rightness and the wrongness of others. Śaṅkara's latter-day followers, though, attempted to reconcile all the darśanas by arranging them with Advaita Vedānta at the top as the perfect truth and all the others below it ascending from the least true through degrees of partial truth. But of course, it was just the followers who were wrong, and not the ancient sages:

The ultimate scope of all the sages, authors of these different systems, is to support the theory of māyā, and their only design is to establish the existence of one supreme God, the sole essence, for these sages could not be mistaken, since they were omniscient. But as they saw that men, addicted to the pursuit of external objects, could not all at once penetrate into the highest truths, they held out to them a variety of theories in order that they might not fall into atheism. Misunderstanding the object which the sages thus had in view, and representing that they even designed to propound doctrines contrary to the Vedas, men have come to regard the specific doctrines of these several schools with preference, and thus become adherents of a variety of systems.<sup>33</sup>

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32. Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 2.1.11, p. 634.

33. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, pp. 48-49.



Radhakrishnan says that this attitude has often "led the Indian thinkers into misty vagueness, lazy acceptance and cheap eclecticism."<sup>34</sup> This 'indifferentism' devalues whatever the non-Advaitins prized, falsifies the history of Indian philosophy and in fact denies that it is an historical development. It is a cheap apologetic stratagem to dispose of one's opponents without rigorously refuting them. The theory that partially untrue doctrines are taught by an omniscient Teacher in order to lead ignorant people gradually from what they can understand to the highest truth was first propounded in the Late Archaic period, in the Bhagavad Gītā and the Mahāyāna Buddhist Sūtras. It was not applied to the different philosophical darśanas until the Late Classical period, when polemical zeal for truth had waned and the issues that divided the darśanas no longer mattered.

Though the classical thinkers were verbally combative, they seem on the whole to have respected each other's civil rights. They intrigued for patronage and often maligned each other, but there was no ecclesiastical machinery for branding a man as a heretic and excommunicating him. The situation was one of contentious tolerance rather than indifferentism.

One variety of indifferentism obtained even during the middle classical period. This was the philosopher's claim that he was not propounding anything new but merely restoring the true sense of the ancient scriptures that intervening ages had misinterpreted. Śaṅkara, for instance, refused to see historical development and differences of opinion within the Upaniṣads, and steadfastly contended that he was merely explaining their true meaning when he was actually borrowing from other schools, inventing new ideas and drastically revising the Upaniṣadic tradition. This sort of thing obscures the impressive progress that Indian philosophy made through the centuries, and by making it appear static diminishes its worth in modern eyes.

The difficulty is common to all scripture-based philosophies, whether Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Rabbinical, Muslim or Confucian. It can be overcome through a doctrine of progress, either of progressive revelation or of progressive reason that carries on from revelation. But the ancient and medieval world did not believe in evolutionary progress. Further, the general Indian conviction that what changes is not real and hence is less valuable made thinkers reluctant to admit that their tradition was changing.

### C. The Historical Periods

Various periodizations of Indian thought have been put forward. There is, of course, no one correct schema. Convenience for the purpose at hand is the chief

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34. Ibid., p. 49.

consideration. I use the following because it gives the largest number of distinctions that can be usefully employed:

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| Archaic:   | a) Early, 900-500 B.C. (late Ṛg Veda to the Buddha).                             |
|            | b) Middle, 500-200 B.C. (the Buddha to the early chapters of the Bhagavad Gītā). |
|            | c) Late, 200 B.C. - 200 A.D. (the Gītā to Nāgārjuna).                            |
| Classical: | a) Early, 200-400 A.D. (Nāgārjuna to Dignāga).                                   |
|            | b) Middle, 400-800 A.D. (Dignāga to Śaṅkara).                                    |
|            | c) Late, 800-1300 A.D. (Śaṅkara to Madhva).                                      |
| Medieval:  | 1300-1800.   |
| Modern:    | 1800-present.  |

The dating of texts in the archaic period is very conjectural, and the life-dates of the Early Classical philosophers are still controversial. Consequently the dates in this schema are to be taken as approximations. The dates for the later periods are rounded off to even hundreds for easy memory, even though exact years could have been given.

#### D. General Features of the Classical Darśanas (Philosophical Schools)

The word darśana is derived from dr̥ś 'to see', and so means a seeing, a way of seeing, a vision, a viewpoint. It is used to designate philosophical schools such as Sāṅkhya and Vedānta, as well as sub-schools like Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita Vedānta. Common synonyms are vāda, 'theory, -ism' and mata 'opinion', 'viewpoint'. Sub-schools and particular theses on a problem are usually termed vāda rather than darśana, for example Śūnyavāda ('empty-ism, the view that all things are empty') and Bhedābhedavāda ('difference-and-non-difference-ism').

The earliest systematic classifications of philosophical views were made by the Buddhists. The Pali Brahmajāla Sutta<sup>35</sup> lists sixty-two views (dr̥ṣṭi, also from dr̥ś 'to see') that it says comprise all possible views. Each dr̥ṣṭi is a proposition on some problem such as whether the world is eternal or whether nirvāṇa consists in the enjoyment of this life.<sup>36</sup> The Buddhist position is not included among the 'views'. Later, when sectarian differences developed within Buddhism, systematic lists of theses and the sects who held them were compiled. The first extensive survey of the classical darśanas was compiled by the Mādhyamika Buddhist Bhāvaviveka about 600 A.D.

35. Dīgha Nikāya No. 1. T. W. Rhys-Davids (tr.), Dialogues of the Buddha, London: Oxford U. Press, 1899-1921, vol. II, pp. 26-55.

36. E. J. Thomas, History of Buddhist Thought, London: Kegan Paul, 1933, pp. 74-76.

In his 'Heart of Mādhyamika' he devotes a chapter each to Hīnayāna Buddhism, Yogācāra Buddhism, Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā.<sup>37</sup> First he expounds the tenets of the school at some length, and then he criticizes it.

This Buddhist literary form has dominated the study of philosophy in Asia for fourteen centuries. It has been adopted by later Hindu authors, by the monastic schools of Tibet, China and Japan, and by almost all modern textbooks on Indian philosophy. The framework is doctrinal rather than historical. It is well suited to handling philosophical factions that are all alive and contending in the reader's own time. There the student wants to know what position an opponent from this or that school will adopt in debate. But when the schools belong to past centuries, this formal lineup obscures development and interaction, and creates the illusion that the tradition was static.

Modern writers usually have classified the Indian systems according to the European typology--realism, nihilism, materialism, idealism, monism, pluralism, theism, atheism, absolutism, relativism. All of these terms are somewhat misleading to the reader who knows only their significance in European philosophy. Moreover, they do not suffice to describe any one system, because they only indicate its position on one or two out of the dozen or so problems on which the darśanas differ significantly.

The most basic Indian classification is into those systems that accept the authority of the Vedas (āstika), and those that do not (nāstika). The classical six darśanas--Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta--are āstika. The Cārvākas, Buddhists and Jains are nāstika. This classification, though, is deceptive and not too significant philosophically. Of the six systems, only Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta rely on the authority of the Vedas. The first four pay a purely nominal allegiance to the Vedas and make no philosophical use whatever of scriptural authority.

Recently two Western writers have drawn up classifications of the darśanas on the basis of their positions on general problems. Potter (See Fig. 1) considers a) whether mokṣa is attained by progress or by a leap, b) whether or not the cause is identical with the effect, c) whether the effect is a transformation or a manifestation of its material cause, d) whether events are related by inference or by co-ordination, e) whether the whole and the parts are the same or different, real or unreal, f) the question of universals and particulars, g) the nature of negation, and h) the nature of error.<sup>38</sup> This is an excellent, effective classification. The only

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37. See V.V. Gokhale, "The Vedānta-philosophy described by Bhavya in his *Madhyamakahrdaya*," *Indo-Iranian Journal*, II, 3 (1958), pp. 165-180.

38. Karl H. Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*, Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963, inside covers. Also Karl H. Potter, "A Fresh Classification of India's Philosophical Systems," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXI, 1 (November, 1961), p. 28.

Figure 1: Classification of the Darśanas (Systems of Philosophy)

| Skeptics<br>(Cārvāka) | Mādhyaṃika<br>Buddhism<br>(Nāgārjuna)             | Yogācāra<br>Buddhism<br>(Vasubandhu)                | Buddhist<br>Logicians<br>(Dharmakīrti)                                      | Prābhākara<br>Mīmāṃsā<br>(Prabhākara)           | Nyāya-<br>Vaiśeṣika   | Bhāṭṭa<br>Mīmāṃsā<br>(Kumārila)  | Jāna  | Sāṃkhya<br>(Īśvarakṛṣṇa)                       | Viśiṣṭādvaita<br>Vedānta<br>(Rāmānuja)             | Bhedābheda<br>(Bhartrṛprapañca) | Bhāmatī<br>Advaita<br>(Vācaspati Miśra)                                      | Vivarana<br>Advaita<br>(Prakāśātman) | Sureśvara's<br>Advaita | Fatalists<br>(Ajivikas?)       |                  |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|--|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Anti-<br>freedom      | Leap-<br>philosophy<br>(ajativāda)                | Progress Philosophies                               |   |   |   |  |   |  |  |                                 |  |                                      |                        | Leap-philosophy<br>(ajativāda) | Anti-<br>freedom |
|                       |   | Asatkāryavāda<br>(effect not pre-existent in cause) |   |   |   | Anekāntavāda<br>(everything both<br>same and<br>different)                         |   | Satkāryavāda<br>(effect pre-existent in cause) |  |                                 |  |                                      |                        |                                |                  |
|                       |   | Sādrśya<br>(co-ordination)                          | Sādrśya and<br>Samavāya   | Samavāya<br>(inherence)                         | Bhedābheda<br>(identity-in-<br>difference)                        | Parināma<br>(transformation)   |   | Vivarta<br>(manifestation)                     |  |                                 |  |                                      |                        |                                |                  |
|                       |   | Wholes Unreal                                       |   | Parts and Wholes<br>Real and Distinct           |   | Wholes Both Equal<br>to and Not Equal<br>to Parts                                  |   | Whole Equal to<br>Sum of Parts                 |  | Parts Unreal                    |  |                                      |                        |                                |                  |
|                       |   | Nominalism<br>(post rem)                            |   | Realism<br>(ante rem)                           |   | ?  |   | Conceptualism<br>(in re)                       |  |                                 |  |                                      |                        |                                |                  |
|                       | ?   |   | Bhedāgraha<br>Apoḥavāda<br>(similarity is<br>non-grasping of<br>difference) |   | Abhāvas or<br>Negative<br>Reals                                   |  | ?   |  | No<br>Negative<br>Reals                            |                                 | Abhedāgraha<br>Apoḥavāda<br>(difference is<br>non-grasping of<br>similarity) |                                      | ?                      |                                |                  |
|                       |   |   | Ātmakhyāti<br>(object of<br>error<br>is the self)                           | Akhyāti<br>(no error in<br>simple<br>judgments) | Anvādhakhyāti<br>(errors only of<br>misplacement<br>or mistiming) | Viparītakhyāti<br>(error consists in<br>taking things other<br>wise than they are) | Satkhyāti or<br>Yathārthakhyāti<br>(object of error<br>real or as is) |  | Anivācāniyakhyāti<br>(object of error is<br>False) |                                 |  |                                      |                        |                                |                  |
|                       | Asatkhyāti<br>(object of<br>error<br>nonexistent) |   |   |   |   |  |   |  |  |                                 |  |                                      |                        |                                |                  |

From Karl H. Potter, Presuppositions of India's Philosophies, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963, inside cover.



error in it is the distinction between leap and progress philosophies. Nāgārjuna, cited as the typical leap philosopher, accepts that there is a path of progress on the level of ordinary truth, and in fact details the stages on the path.<sup>39</sup>

Smart's classification is designed to elucidate the role of religious factors in Indian metaphysics.<sup>40</sup> Consequently his categories are entirely different from Potter's. He asks of each system whether it affirms or denies a) an Absolute, b) a superhuman, personal Lord, c) a creator God, d) that the world is real, e) that each psycho-physical organism has an individual soul, f) that there is rebirth (transmigration), g) that there is release from transmigration, h) that devotion is the means to release, and i) that meditative knowledge is the means to release.<sup>41</sup> He further distinguishes the relative importance of devotion, devotional meditation and meditation-knowledge, assigning to each a numerical value from 0 to 4. Figures 2 and 2a reproduce Smart's tables, substituting the usual names of the schools for his newly coined ones.

Neither of these classifications is exhaustive, but both are useful, and preferable to the usual crude labels in '-ism'. All classification runs the risk of reducing what is original and distinctive to flat stereotypes. It is an aid to preliminary orientation, but should not be the terminal point of one's study. The data are disposed of when they are consigned to pigeon-holes, but they are not necessarily understood. Even the best classification is a makeshift that should be abandoned when the actual features of the philosophies come into clear view.

Each āstika darśana has a short text that summarizes its tenets in their earliest canonical form. These texts consist either of prose aphorisms called sūtras, or of verses called kārikās. Each such work is attributed to one author, though he may have done little more than codify the opinions of his predecessors, and though several of the present texts have been interpolated by later hands.

The sūtras and kārikās were meant to be memorized, so they are as concise as possible, and often so cryptic that they are unintelligible without a commentary. Old-fashioned teachers still follow the ancient practice of making the student memorize the aphorisms first of all, and then explaining them to him one by one. The aphoristic collections began to take shape during the late archaic period, when writing was gradually coming into use not only for transmitting but for composing

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39. In his *Ratnāvalī*, ch. 5, verses 40-61. This is extant only in Tibetan. Manuscript English translation by Kio Kanda, University of Wisconsin, 1966. See ch. 3, note 21.

40. Ninian Smart, *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1964, pp. 125-145.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 129-131.

Figure 2: Religious Tenets of the Darśanas

from Ninian Smart: Doctrine and Argument, p. 130.

|                      | Advaita Vedānta | Mādhyaṃika | Viṣṇuavāda | Viśiṣṭa Advaita | Madhva Vedānta | Śaiva Siddhānta | Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika | Yoga | Sāṃkhya | Mīmāṃsā | Jainism | Theravāda Buddhism | Materialism (Cārvāka) |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Absolute             | X               | X          | X          | O               | O              | O               | O               | O    | O       | O       | O       | O                  | O                     |
| Lord                 | X               | X          | X          | X               | X              | X               | X               | X    | O       | O       | O       | O                  | O                     |
| Creator              | X               | O          | O          | X               | X              | X               | X               | O    | O       | O       | O       | O                  | O                     |
| world real           | O               | O          | O          | X               | X              | X               | X               | X    | X       | X       | X       | X                  | X                     |
| selves               | O               | O          | O          | X               | X              | X               | X               | X    | X       | X       | O       | O                  | O                     |
| rebirth              | X               | X          | X          | X               | X              | X               | X               | X    | X       | X       | X       | X                  | O                     |
| release              | X               | X          | X          | X               | X              | X               | X               | X    | X       | X       | X       | X                  | O                     |
| devotion             | O               | O          | O          | X               | X              | X               | O               | O    | O       | O       | O       | O                  | O                     |
| meditative knowledge | X               | X          | X          | O               | O              | O               | X               | X    | X       | O       | X       | X                  | O                     |

Figure 2a, Smart, p. 133.

|                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| devotion              | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | - | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| devotional meditation | - | - | - | - | 2 | 2 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| meditation-knowledge  | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | O | O | - | 3 | 4 | O | 4 | 4 | O |

texts. But oral exposition continued to be the main form of communication, even when commentaries had been reduced to writing. The teachers then lectured not only on the aphorisms but on their predecessors' commentaries. In due course, sub-commentaries were written down, and sometimes sub-sub-commentaries.

Some masters, for example Vasubandhu and Bhāvaviveka, composed verse works and wrote their own commentaries to them. Others composed independent prose treatises, short manuals resuming their school's teachings, and polemical tracts.

Virtually all the texts are written in Sanskrit. The emergence of the classical darśanas was concomitant with the Sanskrit revival in the first two centuries A.D.. Since Sanskrit was then an artificial language, endowed with rich and transparent derivation devices, the philosophers were able to fashion their terminology and style with no regard for the norms of the unlearned.

The style is thoroughly scholastic. A proposition is enunciated. Then an objection is raised and answered. The author proceeds to a further objection and reply. Eventually another proposition is stated, and the process recurs. Formal definitions are introduced in passing, and axioms are expressed where they are not obvious from context. Proofs are given either in full or in abbreviated form, with rather indifferent concern for formal rigor. Stock examples are frequently adduced. These *dṛṣṭāntas* (similitudes) - such as the pot and the clay, the horns on a rabbit and the rope mistaken for a serpent - are partly an aid to understanding, partly a persuasive device, and partly beginnings of inductive proofs.

Biography was not a fashionable literary form among Indian philosophers. The schools did pass down some traditions about their great masters, but biography rapidly became diluted with hagiography. The Buddhists were somewhat better in this regard than the other schools. But the scanty information about Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu that survives in Tibetan and Chinese does not enable us to make much connection between the man's life and his thought. We must perforce be New Critics and work solely from the texts themselves, because we lack the data to do anything else.

Who were these philosophers, and in what institutions did they function? Some were laymen, and some were monks. A high proportion were brāhmaṇas, but some belonged to the princely ranks. There is not even one woman among them. They came from all parts of India - Asaṅga and Vasubandhu from Peshawar, Āryadeva from Ceylon, Śaṅkara and Bhāvaviveka from Kerala, Nāgārjuna and Rāmānuja from the Madras side of the South. Much is known about the regional distribution of the early Buddhist schools,<sup>42</sup> but very little about the āstikas until 800 A.D. Regionalism

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42. André Bareau, Les Sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule, Saigon: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1955, pp. 35-41.

undoubtedly played a large part in the divergence between sub-schools, but the process cannot be traced. Both monks and householders traveled widely to study, thus disseminating the tradition throughout the country and congregating multitudes of students around famous masters. Great Buddhist monasteries such as Nālandā and Takṣaśilā, Hindu temple cities such as Banaras and Śrīraṅgam, and royal capitals like Srinagar and Kāñcī, attracted hundreds and thousands of students as well as ambitious masters anxious to prove their mettle in debates. And the jungles then covering a great part of the country sheltered countless philosophizing hermits. The poet Bāṇa describes King Harṣa wandering in the Vindhya forests and finding adherents of seventeen schools, including the Materialists, proto-Vedāntins, Sāṅkhya, and Vaiśeṣika, all listening to their own accepted tenets and zealously defending them.<sup>43</sup>

There was much conversion from one school to another, that must have helped to spread knowledge of others' views. There must have been a sizable number of drifting 'seekers', just as in modern universities or those of medieval Europe. The abstract schema of the textbooks represents a simplicity and homogeneity almost certainly contrary to fact. The Tibetan saying 'Every district its own dialect, every lama his own doctrine' comes closer to the case.<sup>44</sup> As the Mahābhārata puts it:

The Vedas are diverse and the Traditions (smṛti) are diverse. He is not a sage whose doctrine (mata) is not individualized. The truth of Dharma is hidden in the cave (of the heart). That by which a great man has gone is a path (panthan, = sect, school).<sup>45</sup>

In other words, socially the darśanas were like Western philosophical schools rather than religious sects.

It has already been said that Indian philosophy relies on linguistics and psychology rather than mathematics and physics. The proto-scientific investigations of the archaic period developed out of religious problems. Linguistics arose out of the need to preserve and recite the Vedic texts precisely. Psychology and physics started with a search for the fundamental stuff(s) of the cosmos, at first so as to understand the inner meaning of sacrifice, and in due course so as to transcend the cosmos through meditative knowledge. No Pythagoras arose in India, and so the crucial importance of shape, quantity and ratio was never realized. Even after the introduction of Greek geometry in the classical period, the message never sank in for the philosophers. The

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43. Madhava Āchārya, The Sarva-darśana-saṁgraha, transl. by E. B. Cowell, London: Kegan Paul, 6th ed., Varanasi (Banaras): Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1961, p. x.

44. C. A. Bell, Grammar of Colloquial Tibetan, Alipore: 1939, p. v.

45. Cowell, op. cit., p. xi.



Pythagoreans conceived cosmogenesis as a generative geometry, in which all complex forms are derived from the smallest possible set of primitives. But for the Indians, essences were substances rather than geometric forms. Indian proto-physics classifies the elements according to their distinctive and constant properties. It is qualitative rather than quantitative. Various speculative generation patterns were worked out, that satisfied the criteria of economy as well as the Greek theories did, but that were not amenable to calculation. The one exception is the Vaiśeṣika atomic theory. Physics was of little importance in Indian philosophy chiefly because Indian physics was speculative rather than operative.

Ancient India's best science was grammar, a qualitative science in which the method of sameness and difference serves to distinguish elements and categories. The grammarians successfully analyzed Sanskrit into sounds, roots, affixes, categories, variants and processes. The philosophers quite naturally tried to construct grammars of the world; what holds good for language must hold good for everything, since it is axiomatic that we are to know the unseen from the seen. So they drew up lists of qualitatively distinct elements as observed by common sense and by yogic introspection. Because mental events are especially accessible to this kind of highly trained introspection, and because psychology is so much more useful to the yogin than physics, Indian psychology became remarkably sophisticated.

This emphasis on linguistics and psychology made Indian philosophy exceptionally anthropocentric, that was in line with the general bias of the civilization. Just as ancient Indian literature treated animals as if they were human beings, just as Indian art treated floral motifs as ornamental adjuncts to human scenes and never developed pure landscape, so Indian philosophy through the ages dwelt on man to the neglect of the rest of existence. That medicine was the chief field in which the more scientific darśanas found application only exaggerated this bias.

Given the advanced state of psychology and linguistics, it is natural that Indian philosophy should surpass the Greeks in theory of meaning and at least equal them in theory of cognition. The limitations of Indian philosophy stem primarily from the deficiencies in its scientific base and from the social status of the philosophers. The Greeks, like the Indians, failed to develop experimental science because philosophers were gentlemen and gentlemen did not do manual labor. Indian philosophy took social form during the middle archaic period when occupational specialization was taking place rapidly. By the classical age when the ideal of the well-rounded gentleman came into vogue, the practice of philosophy had become a profession, chiefly followed by members of priestly or religious orders. The amateur came into fashion too late for India to have a Plato. In Greece, philosophy became secularized without losing its religious problematic. In India, secular studies and anti-religious views were espoused by members of religious orders, and after temporarily achieving autonomy were reabsorbed into the religious tradition. Indian philosophy seems so religious because the intelligentsia and the clergy were

never definitively separated until modern times. They were often an extremely secular and even atheistic clergy; nonetheless they carried the sacred thread and wore the ochre robe.

## II. From Archaic to Classical

### A. Patterns of Development

The classical darśanas, despite their apparent diversity, inherited from earlier times a common world view consisting of many strands, some interdependent and some separable. As it was a general rule not to dispute that on which all parties were in agreement, and as respect for tradition sufficed to muffle mild doubts, even the more dubious elements of this common world view went unchallenged by most of the classical thinkers. Where disputes occurred, the difference was usually part of the inherited problematic, for example whether creation was the work of impersonal, automatic forces or of a personal God.

Diversification and development occurred through a cycle of fission, specialization and combination. For example, the project of listing and mapping the elements is taken up repeatedly in the early Upaniṣads. The early Buddhists carried it further, giving definitive shape to the old lists, subdividing their items, and combining various lists into one master-chart. Meanwhile a specialty developed in the Upaniṣadic schools that scholars in retrospect call 'early Sāṅkhya', that pursued the same listing and mapping project as Buddhist Abhidharma, except on a different structural model. A dozen archaic varieties are recorded in surviving texts, some differing quite sharply from the classical system crystalized in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's Sāṅkhya-kārikā.

Most early Sāṅkhya seems to have been theistic, though classical Sāṅkhya is atheist. Other Vedic teachers developed an atheistic tradition and explained the world-process in terms of impersonal forces, as the Buddhists and Jains and Materialists did, rather than as due to the action of God. Some of these specialized in the analysis of matter and mind, and eventually split off as a separate school, the Vaiśeṣikas. Others, who specialized in the principles of debate, became the Nyāya school. They accepted the psycho-physics and metaphysics of the Vaiśeṣikas, so in due course the two schools merged.

Other Vedic students in the late archaic period specialized not in advancing the solution of problems but in preserving and interpreting the old texts. The Vedas were divided into two sections, the karma-kāṇḍa (section on rites and duties) and the jñāna-kāṇḍa (section on wisdom, i.e., the Upaniṣads), also called Vedānta

('end of the Vedas'). They developed methods of scriptural interpretation (exegesis) and theories about the nature and authority of the scriptures. By the nature of their specialty they were conservative. For them, the great thoughts had already been expressed by the ancient sages. So the Upaniṣadic schools played almost no part in the development of philosophy during the early classical period. Finally, about 500 A.D., they underwent an intellectual reawakening, codified their school doctrine in sūtras, and split into two schools, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. They had finally noticed that the Upaniṣads and the karma-kāṇḍa were really in conflict. In the middle classical period, Mīmāṃsā borrowed from Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and split into two schools, one founded by Prabhākara and the other by Kumārila-bhaṭṭa. Vedānta borrowed from Buddhism, quarrelled irreconcilably with Mīmāṃsā, and rose phenomenally to dominance under the Advaita masters. But other Vedānta lineages continued, and particularly in South India they reacted strongly against the Buddhist, anti-ritualist, anti-realist character of Advaita. So Rāmānuja, Madhva and other realist Vedāntins rejected Śaṅkara's distinctive theses, borrowed from Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā, and interpreted the Brahma-sūtras (Vedānta-sūtras) in a radically different way than Śaṅkara had done.

We can distinguish four successive fissions in the brāhmaṇical tradition. In the first, the śramaṇa movement separated from the brāhmaṇas, --the Buddhists, Jains and Materialists from the Vedic schools. In the second, the realist atheist schools--Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya-Yoga--separated from the Vedic tradition. In the third, the ritualists and the specialists in the Upaniṣads split to form Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. In the fourth, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta each split to form sub-schools that differed as much from each other as from less cognate philosophies.

After each fission came a phase of borrowing and accommodation. The late Upaniṣadic tradition borrowed theism--the worship of Viṣṇu and Śiva--which at first reinforced and later supplanted its own cult of Brahmā. Brahmā was the creator and, in his role as inspirer, the teacher (guru). Viṣṇu and Śiva, though, were each creator, preserver and destroyer, lord of destiny, source of revelation (like Brahmā), boon-bestower, divine friend, grace-giver, supreme object of devotion and contemplation.<sup>1</sup> Viṣṇu, in addition, periodically descended in incarnations such as Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. The Buddhist tradition underwent theistic influence at the same period, and though it did not accept the idea of a creator God, it did develop a more or less theistic savior concept within its own framework. Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Yoga began as atheist systems and then in the phase of post-partition compromise added God in an ill-fitting, non-essential way. Sāṅkhya remained theistic in many of its varieties, except for the one that became classical and the other on which the classical Yoga system is based.

1. Bhagavad Gītā 10.1-8, 9.7-8, 10.33, 11.37; 9.18, 10.20, 10.42; 10.34, 11.32; 10.33, 11.32; 9.29-33, 10.11; 11.44, 11.47; 8.8-10; 9.11, 11.51. See S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., pp. 102-163.

If it seems surprising that God should be an optional element in religious philosophies, consider modern existentialism, with Heidegger and Sartre on the atheist side, Jaspers and Marcel on the theistic side. In the Indian systems, God and natural law (karma, the principles of physics, etc.) were rival candidates for the office of world-ruler. But all the classical systems accepted the efficacy of karma. Consequently, the theists were posed with the problem of reconciling the roles of God and karma.

During the late archaic period, the ascetic ethic and its concomitant world-view penetrated the Vedic tradition to such an extent that only proto-Mīmāṃsā continued to hold out against the view that mokṣa is the highest end of man. The late and middle Upaniṣads affirm the primacy of mokṣa, but do not advocate ascetic renunciation in order to attain it. The great Upaniṣadic sages were householders. But Śaṅkara was a monk, and a fervent advocate of the celibate, homeless life. The Bhagavad Gītā at the beginning of the late archaic period tried to harmonize the conflicting paths of ritual action, social duty, knowledge, meditation, and devotion. It favored meditation, but opposed renunciation of the household life. This was like favoring war and opposing bloodshed; it did not work. Serious yogins in the āstika tradition became sannyāsins (renunciants) living much like Jain and Buddhist monks. In late archaic times the āśrama (life-stage) doctrine was advanced by brāhmaṇical thinkers to harmonize the conflicting goals of life. A man was to be celibate and ascetic in his student youth and his forest-dwelling old age. In his middle years he was to be a householder. But Śaṅkara again sided with the Buddhists against the brāhmaṇ tradition, holding that the householder stage was not mandatory for all.

After the second fission, that individuated three of the six āstika darśanas, the Sāṅkhya world-map was combined with yogic lore to form the Yoga system. This was at once a blend and a fission, since it split off a specialized subject-matter that the Upaniṣads, the Buddhist scriptures, and the Mahābhārata treat in passing.

Nyāya was no sooner developed than it was adopted by the other schools. It formulated the rules of debate and the canons of proof. These were almost--though not quite--free from metaphysical corollaries; so all schools accepted them with a few modifications. In the middle classical period, Buddhists advanced the subject of nyāya ('analysis') remarkably, and very soon the other schools appropriated much of this Buddhist logic. Āstika Nyāya revived in late classical times, as the New Nyāya school, that took logic back from the Buddhists and raised it to such technical perfection that it ranks second only to grammar among the scientific achievements of ancient India. Later Vedānta adopted New Nyāya logic, so that it excelled in technical precision all the more when its imagination and originality were waning. The same growth of ornamental elaboration while structural vision weakened is to be seen in the sculpture, architecture and literature of the late classical period.



## B. The Central Problem: Causation

A central problem in the archaic period was the identity and character of the force that animates the cosmos. Nāgārjuna, the founder of Mādhyamika Buddhism, whose career I take as the beginning of the classical period, devotes the first chapter of his major work<sup>2</sup> to a critique of the wide variety of views on the question that the schools at his time exhibited. An early commentary on this chapter says:

Question: Why did he compose this treatise?

Reply: Some men say that all things arise from Maheśvara Deva (= Śiva). Some say they arise from Viṣṇu Deva. Some say that they arise from conjunction. Some say that they arise from time. Some say that they arise from world-nature (prakṛti). Some say that they arise from transformation. Some say that they arise from own-being (svabhāva). Some say that they arise from atoms. Because there are such errors they fall into false views such as [that things] have no cause, have false causes, are annihilated or are permanent.<sup>3</sup>

To this list we must add the Buddhist tenet that all things arise through cause and condition in a series of dependent co-arising. Note that there is no mention of the Upaniṣadic doctrine that Brahman is the source of all things. Otherwise, this Buddhist schema fairly represents the gamut of positions on the central issue of causation. To restate the matter:

1. Things arise from combinations of other things.  
Buddhist: in associative sequence patterns (pratitya-samutpāda)  
Vaiśeṣika: through conjunction of atoms
2. Things arise as modifications of an underlying substance.  
Sāṅkhya: an unintelligent unmanifested stuff (prakṛti)  
Upaniṣads: an intelligent unmanifested stuff (Brahman)  
Theists: God (Śiva, Viṣṇu)
3. Things arise out of their own inherent potential.  
Some Materialists: own-being (svabhāva)
4. Causal law and order are maintained by a special principle.  
a) a law that is neither a thing nor substance but rather a relation.  
Buddhist: pratitya-samutpāda  
Vaiśeṣika: conjunction (= inherence, samavāya)

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2. Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā, see S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., pp. 340-342.

3. Chung-lun, Taisho 30, 1b 18-22. Richard H. Robinson, Early Mādhyamika in India and China, Madison, Wisconsin: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1967, p. 66.

- b) an intelligent, immanent and transcendent ruler.  
Theists: Viṣṇu, Śiva.  
Upaniṣads: Brahman
- c) a thing that is sui generis.  
Vaiśeṣika: time
- d) a subtle force that acts at a distance through time and space.  
Vaiśeṣika: adṛṣṭa (the unseen)  
Sarvāstivāda (Buddhist): avijñapti (the unnoticed)  
Mīmāṃsā: apūrva (the unpreceded)

### C. Cosmology

It is clear from the foregoing that the problem of causation was central to philosophy because it concerned the chief cosmological question: from what and through the power of what do all things come into being? This question, in turn, mattered because of its moral implications. It was believed that effective action was contingent upon causality. If there is a plane of moral causation (karma, adṛṣṭa, etc.) then right action must take account of it. If there is a God who creates, sustains and destroys the world, then He is a power with whom man must reckon. If all things including man have a determinate nature, then real improvement and degeneration are impossible. If things have no causes, then moral capital (merit) cannot be accumulated. The issue is whether man has the power to shape his destiny.

The controversy about causation was waged within the limits of a generally accepted cosmology. This world-plan was rather like a rāga in Indian music; the pattern was fixed, but each performance embellished it with free variations. The Buddhist cosmologies are more detailed and more fixed than the Hindu ones. The Abhidharma masters debated such points as whether the warders in hell suffer along with the condemned, and if so whether this is just. The authors of the Purāṇas, being generally less scholarly than the Buddhist masters, were equally pedantic but did not achieve so much pseudo-scientific rigor. We need not go into the details of the various world-conceptions, but the main features bear on philosophy.

In all the classical cosmologies,<sup>4</sup> the extended world consists of a hierarchy of levels, ranging from the deepest hells far below the earth-surface up through many storeys of paradises to a highest heaven (variously named by the different religious

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4. For cosmologies, consult: James Hastings (ed.), Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, articles "Ages of the World (Buddhist)", 1.187-190 (L. de la Vallée Poussin); "Ages of the World (Indian)", 1.200-202 (H. Jacobi); "Cosmogony and Cosmology (Buddhist)", 4.129-138 (L. de la Vallée Poussin); "Cosmogony and Cosmology (Indian)", 4.155-161 (H. Jacobi).

sects). The world-system consists of three planes or worlds, according to the Buddhists termed desire-plane (kāma-dhātu), form-plane (rūpa-dhātu) and formless-plane (ārūpya-dhātu), according to the Hindus simply earth, atmosphere and heaven. Each plane is populated by animate beings whose place in the moral hierarchy corresponds to their cosmological level. The Buddhists list five destinies (gati) -- the inmates of hell, animals, ghosts (preta), men, and gods (deva). This leaves many kinds of 'gaseous fauna' out of account, such as the asuras (titans, belligerent divinities who assault the devas), the gandharvas (celestial musicians, servants to the four world-guardians who rule the cardinal points), the yakṣas (demons), etc. Cosmographers tried to segregate these classes of spirits and assign each to a different home, but the fertility of the mythopoetic imagination defeated their attempts at apartheid. Only the denizens of hell stayed in place. Otherwise, animals and ghosts shared this world and the higher spirits commonly left their mansions to move among men.

The inhabitants of the paradises have bodies, but the higher the paradise, the subtler, purer and more luminous the matter out of which these bodies are made. In the highest paradises, according to the Buddhists, the thought-stuff (citta, vijñāna) itself constitutes the bodies. The split between mind and matter (nāma-rūpa) is transcended in the formless plane.

The yogin, even in this life, can ascend to the paradises or descend to the hells and interview their inhabitants. The Buddhists ordered the paradises of the form-plane and formless-plane according to the series of trances in which they thought these heavens could be reached. This belief makes sense on the assumption that mind (manas or citta) is an all-pervasive, subtle stuff, invisible but luminous, intrinsically pure and, because it is so fine, unobstructed by grosser substances. The philosophical schools debated whether the manas (mind, attention) is atomic or omnipresent, but one way or another each school affirmed some psychic entity that is all-pervasive. The modern student of Indian philosophy must be particularly careful to keep this in mind because Descartes, by defining mind as unextended and non-spatial, finally ruptured the connection between psychology and cosmology that the Greek tradition shared with the Indian.

Death in this common Indian cosmology is simply a transfer from one embodied station to the next one, either on the same plane or a higher or lower one. When the notion of transmigration first emerged about 600 B.C., life was still considered quite pleasant, and the major incentive to seek liberation was that dying is painful. Neither the Upaniṣads nor early Buddhist literature dwell much on the terrors of hell, though the Buddhists emphasize the miseries of human life. The middle archaic schools were more concerned with getting to heaven than with staying out of hell. By the late archaic period, pedants had worked out a complete code of punishments in the next life, matching each class of misdeed meticulously with a particular fate. According to the Laws of Manu, the slayer of a brāhmaṇ becomes an animal or an

outcaste in the next life, a brāhmaṇ who drinks liquor will become an insect or bird, those who eat forbidden food become worms, and those who have intercourse with low-caste women become ghosts (pretas).<sup>5</sup> The Buddhists have equally detailed and implausible codes. The purpose behind these schemata is clearly to supplement mundane law and thus to dissuade people from crime where mundane justice does not suffice to do so. The hells are transparently modeled on the prisons, just as the paradises are modeled on palace life and in effect are often called mansions (vimāna). The Chinese translated naraka (hell) as 'prison in the earth' (ti-yü). It is worth some thought that the idea of hell becomes important and receives elaboration only during and after the Maurya Empire (c. 300 B.C.), just as concrete schemata of reward and punishment in other worlds only came into general vogue in the Mediterranean during the imperial age. World-view is often a fairly direct projection of the political order.

As rebirth became more unpleasant, death by comparison lost its sting. Even the gods fear falling from paradise, since they must then leave their exquisite pleasures. Time and again, the texts harangue the reader to remember that he cannot take his property or his body or his friends and relatives with him. In this respect, transmigration expresses a stark individualism and seems anti-social. The same must of course be said for the doctrine of personal immortality in which the alienated, de-socialized masses of the Hellenistic West took refuge. Yet the company of friends and relatives is the foremost pleasure to which the hopes of the good man are directed, and the welfare of relatives is one of the chief ends for which Hindus and Buddhists perform pious acts. The real contrast lies in another direction; whereas the God of the Old Testament punished and occasionally rewarded nations, karma only rewards and punishes individuals. Moral causality on the social plane is merely the patterning of coincident or divergent individual retributions.

The structure of the cosmos and the species that inhabit it are eternal. During some phases of the cosmic cycle certain species are vacant, but no species is ever filled which has not been occupied by beings in a previous cosmic cycle. Thus there is no evolution of new species. The world arises, from whatever cause, after a long interlude (pralaya) in which nothing is manifested. At the beginning, Dharma (moral order, correct conduct) prevails, and beings live long, pure lives. Gradually corruption sets in; beings eat coarser food and start to have sexual intercourse; as Dharma decays, the natural food supply decreases, and due to scarcity people start to claim property, build houses, trade and observe social distinctions. Life span gets shorter, stature decreases, and mores degenerate. In the end, the world is destroyed by Fire (desiccating sun), Water (torrential rains) and Wind (earth-shaking hurricanes).

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5. The Laws of Manu, transl. by G. Bühler, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 25, pp. 496-497.



Opinions differed about the state of beings in the cosmic night after the receptacle-world is destroyed. Some Buddhists held that a hundred thousand years before the end of the eon a deva warns living beings of the destruction to come, so that most of them achieve rebirth in higher worlds before this one comes to an end. The Hindu cosmologies held in general that the cosmic interlude is universal.

Within a cosmic age (kalpa or yuga) great savior heroes arise who restore Dharma and thus temporarily reverse the secular trend. As morality and social welfare are concomitant, an age of Dharma is by definition an age of prosperity, good health and long life. The individual can affect his own destiny significantly by right action, but whether he can affect the course of history is uncertain. No classical school maintained a complete determinism, just as none affirmed a doctrine of progress.

Kingship is assumed to be the natural, universal form of political life. Even the gods and spirits have their kings. Thus the philosophers did not debate the alternative merits of monarchy, oligarchy, tyranny and democracy, as the Greeks did, nor did they conceive of political evolution from one form to another. Reformist thought consisted almost entirely of suggestions for making the existing order work better through moral regeneration or more cunning manipulation of the system. Structural change was neither proposed nor debated. This was not because Indian society was static (which it certainly was not), but simply because through centuries of ignoring and neglecting to record the data of their history Indian thinkers had neither the material nor the habits of observation to think about the synchronic and diachronic diversity of their political life.

One virtue of the ancient cosmology is that it does not set man over against nature or the natural over against the supernatural. All the animate kingdom is human in a wider sense, and gods and demons are merely higher grades within the spectrum. Nature, though, is excessively humanized, and properly speaking there is no supernatural, the celestial realms being merely the upper storeys of the terrestrial.

#### D. The Elements of Existence

Ontology (theory of being) emerged gradually from cosmology in the early archaic period. The connection remains apparent in the classical systems, where the physical world is still thought to be composed of the four cosmic elements (mahābhūta)--earth, water, fire and air--along with a fifth, ether or space (ākāśa) which most schools admit. There is a sixth element, citta (mind) or vijñāna (consciousness), according to some. The world-and-person charts of all the classical schools derive from the six

elements by combination or subdivision.<sup>6</sup>

The Materialists held that the four elements are the only reality, that sensation, perception and consciousness are a process within the physical elements, just like fermentation in grain. Space (*ākāśa*) is not a subtle ether but an extended vacuum to which some Materialists held that the senses and intelligence return at death.<sup>7</sup>

The first question is whether the elements are primary, derived from one of themselves, or derived from some more fundamental substance. Those who first held that the elements are non-derivative were the founders of Indian pluralism. Among their successors are the Materialists, the Jains, Hīnayāna Buddhists, and Vaiśeṣika. Those Upaniṣadic thinkers who derived the elements either from one element or from yet another principle were the first monists. In their lineage are Sāṅkhya and Vedānta.

The Upaniṣads, as usual, present different views. One place says that wind and atmosphere are immortal.<sup>8</sup> Another says that from the Ātman arose *ākāśa* (space, ether), from *ākāśa* wind, from wind fire, from fire water, from water the earth.<sup>9</sup> It would appear that both statements cannot be true. The Brahma Sūtras, though, maintain that *ākāśa* is unproduced, yet affirm the successive generation of the other elements from it.<sup>10</sup>

An early Buddhist text preserves a list of six heterodoxies. One of these is the doctrine that there are seven unmade, eternal 'bodies' -- earth, water, fire, wind, happiness, suffering and the soul.<sup>11</sup> This resembles the teaching of Empedocles, who held that the elements are earth, water, fire, air, love and strife.<sup>12</sup> One of the 'undeclared points' of early Buddhism was whether the soul (*jīva*) and the body are the same or different. The Materialists said they are the same. This atheist with his seven principles said that soul and body are different. He went on to draw the

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6. *Garbhāvākraṇṭi-sūtra*, "Man consists of six elements", quoted in Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośa*, transl. by L. de la Vallée Poussin, Paris: Geuthner, 1923-1931, vol. I, p. 66.

7. James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 4.131.

8. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.3.3, p. 193.

9. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1, p. 542.

10. *The Vedānta-Sūtras (Brahma-Sūtras)* of Bādarāyaṇa, with the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, transl. by George Thibaut, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 3 vols., 1890-1904, *Sacred Books of the East*, vols. 34, 38, 48, 2.3.1-2, vol. 38, p. 3ff.

11. *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Samaññaphala-sutta*, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, p. 74, no.

26. See E. J. Thomas, *History of Buddhist Thought*, pp. 72-73.

12. G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1963, p. 327ff; E. J. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

conclusion, abhorrent to the Buddhists but espoused by the Gītā, that there is no slayer, that the swordsman who splits a head is not destroying life but merely separating substances.

The simplest and one of the most primitive formulas divides the person into name-and-form (nāma-rūpa), that is mind (citta, manas, vijñāna) and body (kāya). The Buddhists, in accord with the usage of their times, defined nāma as consisting of mental factors, and rūpa as consisting of the four elements. In the early Upaniṣads and early Buddhist texts, words for thought, consciousness, mind and perception are not rigorously distinguished, and are often used as synonyms. During the middle archaic period these terms were restricted and to some extent defined. There was much experimentation, and each school produced several variant schemata before eventually choosing one as standard. In the process, psychology became differentiated from cosmology, and the way was prepared for the profuse ramification of psychological lists in the classical schools of philosophy (darśanas).

One of the early Buddhist formulas, the five skandhas (bundles, groups, trunks, layers of a plant-stalk), consists simply of form (rūpa) plus a fourfold differentiation of name (nāma) into consciousness, psychic formations (saṃskāra), conception and feeling. As saṃskāra is the vaguest of these terms, and as it is pluralized, it became the hold-all category for mental dharmas in Abhidharma elaborations.

Primitive Materialism worked out a correspondence between the five great elements, the five sense-objects and the five sense-organs. (See Fig. 3) All fifteen of these items are incorporated into the Buddhist formulas of the twelve āyatanas (spheres, ports) and the eighteen dhātus (elements) (see Fig. 4), into the Vaiśeṣika list of entities (see Fig. 5), and into the Sāṅkhya list of twenty-five principles (see Fig. 6).

The Materialists had not included mind in their schema. Each other school added it in its own way. The Buddhists made manas (mind, attention) a sense-organ, and furnished it with an object, dharmas (inner natures, what names refer to, ideas). The six object-fields (viśaya) plus the six senses (indriya) constitute the twelve āyatanas. But the contact of sense and object produces a consciousness (vijñāna), and as there are six senses, there are six sense-consciousnesses. When these are added to the twelve āyatanas, the result is the eighteen dhātus (elements).

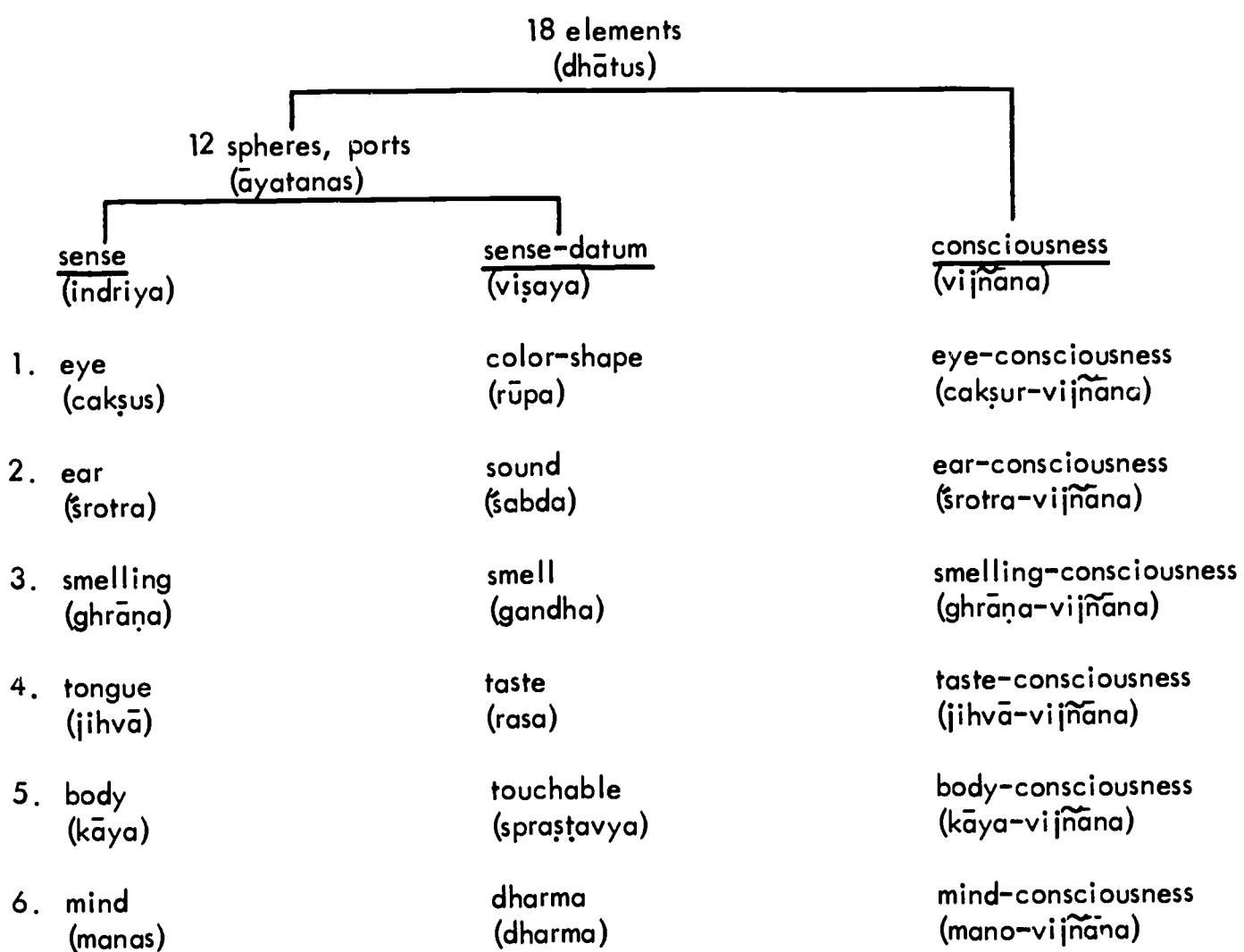
This analytic differentiation provided a richer physics and a better theory of perception, but it reduced thinking to the perception of ideas, gave a poor account of the higher mental activities, and by pluralizing consciousness imperiled mental unity. Much of later Buddhist philosophy consists of putting back together that which the early analysts had taken apart.

In due course someone noticed that the correlation of the five elements with the

**Figure 3: The Common Element-schema**

| <u>great element</u><br>(mahābhūta) | <u>sense-datum</u><br>(viṣaya) | <u>sense-organ</u><br>(indriya) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. earth<br>(pṛthivī)               | smell<br>(gandha)              | smelling<br>(ghrāṇa)            |
| 2. water<br>(āp)                    | taste<br>(rasa)                | tongue<br>(jihvā)               |
| 3. fire<br>(tejas)                  | visible-form<br>(rūpa)         | eye<br>(cakṣus)                 |
| 4. wind<br>(vāyu)                   | touchable<br>(sparśa)          | body<br>(kāya)                  |
| 5. space, ether<br>(ākāśa)          | sound<br>(śabda)               | ear<br>(śrotra)                 |

**Figure 4: The Early Buddhist Element-schema**





**Figure 5: The Vaiśeṣika Categories (padārtha)**  
according to Vaiśeṣika Sūtra

| <u>category</u>                     |   |  |  |                                       |                                       |                                      |                                 |                              |                              |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <u>substance</u><br>(dravya)     | earth <sup>1</sup><br>(pṛthivī)           | water <sup>2</sup><br>(āp)                   | fire <sup>3</sup><br>(tejas)           | wind <sup>4</sup><br>(vāyu)           | ether <sup>5</sup><br>(ākāśa)         | time <sup>6</sup><br>(kāla)          | place <sup>7</sup><br>(dik)     | soul <sup>8</sup><br>(ātman) | mind <sup>9</sup><br>(manas) |
| 2. <u>property</u><br>(guṇa)        | smell <sup>1</sup><br>(gandha)            | taste <sup>2</sup><br>(rasa)                 | form <sup>3</sup><br>(rūpa)            | touch <sup>4</sup><br>(sparśa)        | sound*<br>(śabda)                     | number <sup>5</sup><br>(saṁkhyā)     | size <sup>6</sup><br>(parimāṇa) |                              |                              |
|                                     | separateness <sup>7</sup><br>(prthaktva)  | conjunction <sup>8</sup><br>(saṁyoga)        | disjunction <sup>9</sup><br>(vibhāga)  | priority <sup>10</sup><br>(paratva)   | posterity <sup>11</sup><br>(aparatva) |                                      |                                 |                              |                              |
|                                     | cognition <sup>12</sup><br>(buddhi)       | pleasure <sup>13</sup><br>(sukha)            | pain <sup>14</sup><br>(duḥkha)         | desire <sup>15</sup><br>(icchā)       | aversion <sup>16</sup><br>(dveṣa)     | volition <sup>17</sup><br>(prayatna) |                                 |                              |                              |
| 3. <u>action</u><br>(karma)         | upward thrust <sup>1</sup><br>(utkṣepaṇa) | downward thrust <sup>2</sup><br>(avakṣepaṇa) | contraction <sup>3</sup><br>(ākuñcana) | expansion <sup>4</sup><br>(prasāraṇa) | locomotion <sup>5</sup><br>(gamana)   |                                      |                                 |                              |                              |
| 4. <u>generality</u><br>(samānya)   |   |  |  |                                       |                                       |                                      |                                 |                              |                              |
| 5. <u>particularity</u><br>(viśeṣa) |   |  |  |                                       |                                       |                                      |                                 |                              |                              |
| 6. <u>inherence</u><br>(samavāya)   |   |  |  |                                       |                                       |                                      |                                 |                              |                              |

\* Vaiśeṣika Sūtra does not count sound as a property (guṇa), but allows it to be the mark (liṅga) of space, ether (ākāśa). (Vaiśeṣika Sūtra, 1.1.27). Praśastapāda, though, counts sound as a property. (S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., pp. 398, 403)

The first three substances (dravyas) possess properties (guṇas) in addition to their mark:

earth - smell, taste, rūpa, touch.

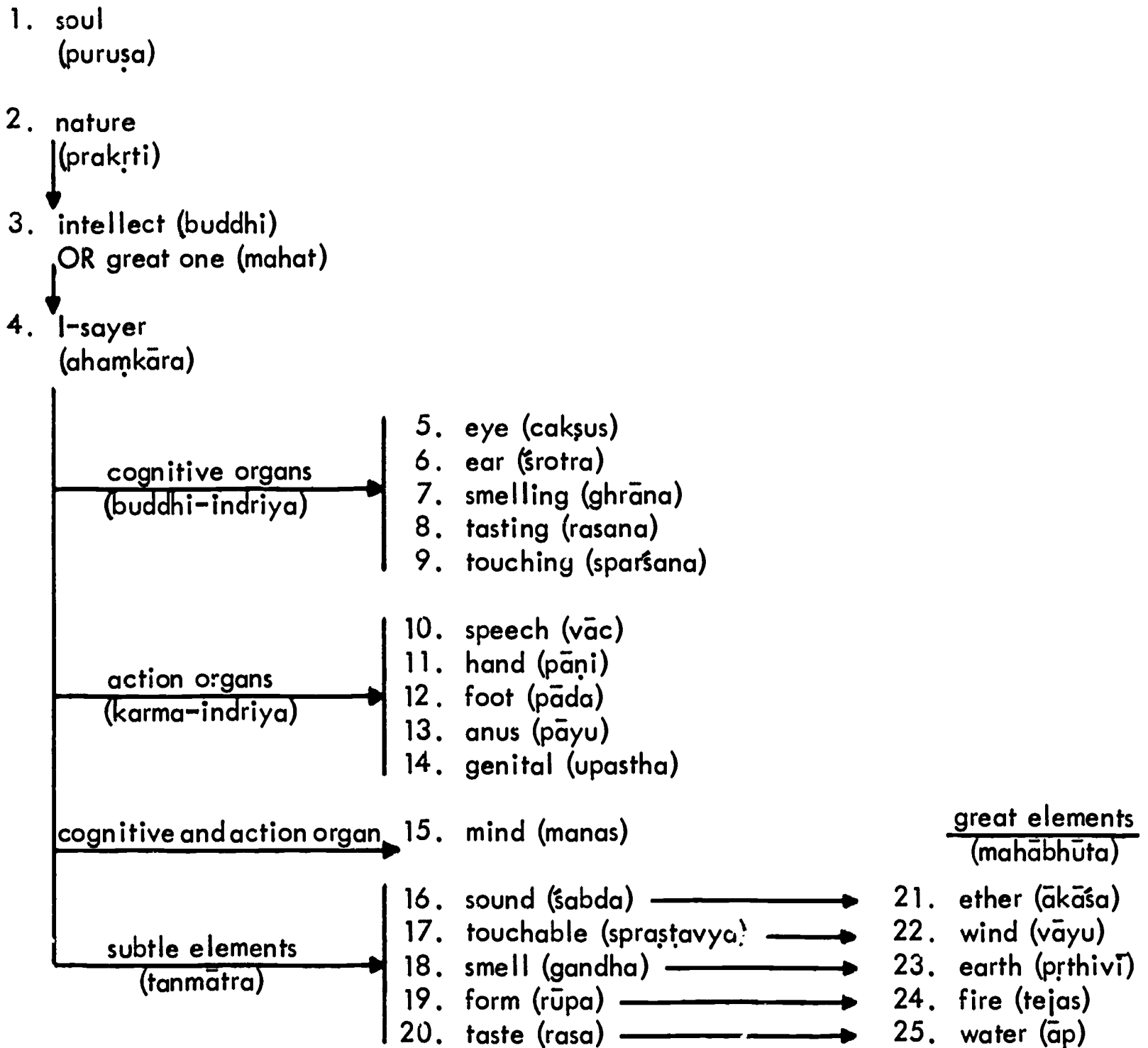
water - taste, rūpa, touch.

fire - rūpa, touch.

wind - touch. (Vaiśeṣika Sūtra, 2.1.1-5, 9; S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 389)

**Figure 6: The Sāṅkhya Emanation-chart**  
**The Twenty-five Principles (Tattvas)**

according to Īśvarakṛṣṇa  
Sāṅkhya-kārikā 25, 26, 27.



5 to 15 are sattvika (consisting of sattva guṇa)  
16 to 20 are tāmasa (consisting of tamas guṇa)

**Figure 7: The Seventy-five Elemental Force-Factors (Dharmas)  
of the Buddhist Sarvastivadins**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Unconditioned<br>force-factors<br>(dharmas) | ākāśa, intentional cessation, non-intentional cessation   |
| Conditioned<br>force-factors<br>(dharmas)   |   |
| 1. form<br>(rūpa)                           | five sense organs (indriya): eye, ear, nose, tongue, body<br>five sense fields (viśaya): rūpa, sound, smell, taste, touch   |
| 2. mind<br>(citta)                          |   |
| 3. mentals<br>(caitasika)                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) general: feeling, conception, volition, contact, wish, cognition, memory, attention, resolve, concentration</li> <li>b) good general: faith, energy, equanimity, shame, remorse, non-greed, non-hatred, non-injury, facility, vigilance</li> <li>c) defiled general: folly, negligence, laziness, non-faith, torpor, frivolity</li> <li>d) bad general: non-shame, non-remorse</li> <li>e) secondary defiled: anger, disparagement, stinginess, jealousy, rivalry, injury, malice, deceit, dissimulation, conceit</li> <li>f) indeterminate: repentance, drowsiness, consideration, investigation, lust, hostility, pride, doubt</li> </ul> |
| 4. mind-dissociated<br>(citta-viprayukta)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attainment, non-attainment</li> <li>similarity</li> <li>the thoughtless, the thoughtless trance, the cessation trance</li> <li>life-force</li> <li>birth, abiding, aging, impermanence</li> <li>name-collection, sentence-collection, phoneme-collection</li> </ul>  |

five sense-objects is problematical. Earth, for instance, is not merely smellable but tastable, visible and touchable. This observation led to a more complex correlation in which each element starting from earth has one less sense-quality, and ākāśa (space, ether), the fifth, has no sense-qualities in common with the other four elements. (See Fig. 5) The Vaiśeṣikas incorporated this formula<sup>13</sup> and deduced by the method of elimination that sound must be the mark of ether.<sup>14</sup>

The Vaiśeṣikas solved the problem by distinguishing substances (dravya), properties (guṇa), and actions (karma). The five elements are classed as substances. Four out of the five sense-qualities are classed as properties, while the fifth--sound--is held not to belong to the four elements but to space or ether (ākāśa). The defining characteristics of substance are that it possesses action and property and is a combinative cause.<sup>15</sup> A property is something that inheres in a substance, does not possess a property, and is not an independent cause in conjunctions and disjunctions.<sup>16</sup> Action consists of upward thrust, downward thrust, contraction, expansion and motion.<sup>17</sup> An action resides in only one substance, has no property, and is an independent cause of conjunctions and disjunctions.<sup>18</sup>

As properties have no locus of their own, they can co-occur in the same substance, or in the same composite thing. Thus there is no problem in the earth element possessing four properties. Substances are not annihilated by either effects or causes, while properties and actions are destroyed. The elements are eternal, but their conjunctions and disjunctions, being properties and the effects of action, are temporary.

Buddhist Abhidharma did not distinguish between substance, property and action. It attempted to analyze everything into elemental force-factors called dharmas. The most advanced stage of this enterprise can be seen in Vasubandhu's Abhidharma-kośa (c. 4th cent. A.D.).<sup>19</sup> The first of the five headings under which he ranges the seventy-five dharmas is rūpa (form, matter). (See Fig. 7) Note that the four great elements are not even listed as rūpa dharmas. They are subsumed under the sense-field 'the tangible', because this is the one sense-quality the four all share. Not only that, but by 'earth' Vasubandhu means not the common stuff but merely the principle of solidity that is most prominently attested in common earth.

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13. Vaiśeṣika Sūtras 2.1.1-5; S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 389.

14. Ibid., 2.1.25-27; Ibid., p. 390.

15. Ibid., 1.1.6; Ibid., p. 388.

16. Ibid., 1.1.16; Ibid., p. 388.

17. Ibid., 1.1.7; Ibid., p. 387.

18. Ibid., 1.1.17; Ibid., p. 388.

19. See note 6.



Earth thus becomes the solid principle that holds things in place, water the wet principle that coheres, fire the hot principle that cooks or transforms things, and wind the mobile principle that expands (grows and displaces). The five sense-fields, the five sense-organs and 'the unnoticed' (aviññapti) are secondary matter (bhautika). This means, not that they are derived from the four elements, but that they cannot exist except in combination with them. The minimal molecule consists of four atoms of primary matter combined with each atom of the visible, smell, taste and touch, with an additional atom of sound if the matter is resonant.<sup>20</sup>

Vasubandhu achieves in this ingenious way much the same result as the Vaiśeṣikas without having to admit extended persisting substances, that would have gone against his school-tenet that everything is momentary and insubstantial. Rather than having the sense-properties inhere in the elements, he has them co-occur with them. Rather than distinguishing actions from substances, he makes a certain kind of action the essence of each element. Observe that Vasubandhu's matter (rūpa) is a set of abstract concepts far removed from the vague common sense notions of the sixth century B.C.

If classifying the senses (indriya) as matter appears curious, their exact definition is even more remarkable. They consist of extremely subtle translucent matter that is imperceptible, indivisible, weightless, incombustible and disappears at death without residue!<sup>21</sup> This matter is atomic, however, and its atoms cover the eyeball, the eardrum, the tongue, the interior of the nose, and the entire skin.<sup>22</sup>

Sāṅkhya is monistic in that it derives all the 'evolutes' from one fundamental substance (prakṛti, pradhāna). It is an elaboration of the early Upaniṣadic emanation-schemata, just as Vaiśeṣika and Abhidharma are developments of the early Buddhist and Materialist formulas. The earliest emanation-series that is clearly of the Sāṅkhya kind occurs in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad. There the series is 1. the Person (puruṣa), 2. the unmanifested (avyakta), 3. the great Ātman, 4. the buddhi (intellect-will), 5. the manas, 6. the elements (artha), 7. the senses (indriya).<sup>23</sup> A few verses before, in another version of the list, the sense-fields (viṣaya) are placed below the senses.<sup>24</sup>

The 'great Ātman' is the Golden Germ, the cosmic embryo within which

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20. Theodore Stcherbatsky, The Central Conception of Buddhism, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1923, p. 12.

21. Abhidharmakośa, 1.15, n. 1; T. Stcherbatsky, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

22. Abhidharmakośa, 1.93-94.

23. Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.3.10, p. 625.

24. Ibid., 1.3.3-4, pp. 623-624.

Brahmā the Creator gestated and out of which he made heaven and earth.<sup>25</sup> In the early Upaniṣads, the Ātman (= Brahmā, = Prajāpati) creates by his will (manas). Sometimes he divides himself into a male (puruṣa) and a female (vāc, Speech), couples with her, and so begets the cosmos.<sup>26</sup> He forms and identifies himself by saying aham (I), hence he is called ahaṁkāra, 'the I-sayer'. Since thought, word and act are not yet separated, his self-affirmation creates the world.

A set of eight things that are termed the lower nature (prakṛti) of God is given in Gītā 7.4. They are: earth, water, fire, air, space (ākāśa), mind (manas), intellect-will (buddhi) and the I-sayer (ahaṁkāra). Late archaic Sāṅkhya also separated the Person (puruṣa), no. 1 in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad list, from no. 2, the unmanifested (avyakta). By making the Person and unmanifested Nature (prakṛti) two independent principles rather than one substance, Sāṅkhya became dualistic. This change had taken place by the first century A.D., as the description of Sāṅkhya in Aśvaghoṣa's 'Life of the Buddha' distinguishes the 'knower of the field' from the 'field' -- the spirit from primal Nature.<sup>27</sup> The later chapters of the Gītā do likewise.<sup>28</sup>

Gītā 13.5, a late interpolation in the text, lists twenty-four Sāṅkhya tattvas (principles): the great elements (mahābhūta), the I-sayer (ahaṁkāra), intellect-will (buddhi), avyakta (= prakṛti); then the ten organs or indriyas (five of action and five of cognition) and one mind (the manas), and the five sense-spheres (gocara = viśaya). The set of eight is given in ascending order as they are retracted into the unmanifest at the dissolution of the world, rather than in descending order as they emanate during creation. Ahaṁkāra (the I-sayer) is now in its classical position, but the great elements (mahābhūtas) are still in a high rank, as subtle elements and creative forces; whereas in the Sāṅkhya Kārikā they are gross elements derived from the tanmātras (subtle elements), (See Fig. 6). The items listed as tanmātras, though, are the familiar five sense-fields (viśaya) -- sound, touchable, smell, visible, and taste.

We are now in a position to survey the vicissitudes of the great elements (mahābhūtas), organs (indriyas) and sense-fields (viśayas) in the Sāṅkhya of the

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25. The Laws of Manu, pp. 5-6. Cf. James Hastings (ed.) Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 4.157.

26. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.17, p. 172; J.A.B. Van Buitenen, "Studies in Sāṅkhya (II)", Journal of the American Oriental Society, LXXVII, 1 (1957), pp. 20, 21.

27. The Buddha-carita of Aśvaghoṣa, transl. E. B. Cowell, F.M. Muller, and J. Takakusu, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 49, 12.20, p. 125.

28. Bhagavad Gītā, 13.1-5.

late archaic period. The 'elements' (artha), no. 6 in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad list, are clearly the great elements, and from their position they seem to be derivatives of the mind (manas). Similarly, the set of eight appears to be a derivation series, so we have: 1. great Ātman/buddhi → 2. buddhi/ahaṁkāra (I-sayer) → 3. manas (mind) → 4. ākāśa (space, ether) → 5. wind → 6. fire → 7. water → 8. earth.<sup>29</sup>

The organs or indriyas, Kaṭha Upaniṣad list no. 7, are derived from the great elements, no doubt matching each sense with the element whose characteristic sense-datum it apprehends--space and hearing, wind and touching, fire and sight, water and tasting, earth and smelling. The sense-fields in Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.3.4 do not fit too clearly into the picture, but are probably derived from the great elements (of which they are the marks) rather than from the organs (of which they are the objects). The underlying principle is that perception consists of contact between like elements in the senses and their objects. The eye sees light because it contains a subtle form of light, and so forth.<sup>30</sup>

This principle is apparent in two early classical versions of Sāṅkhya now preserved only in Chinese. In the earlier of the two, 'Formula I', the order is: ahaṁkāra (I-sayer) → subtle elements → great elements → organs<sup>31</sup> (See Fig. 8). This agrees with the Sāṅkhya Kārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa in deriving the great elements (mahābhūtas) from the subtle elements (tanmātras), but differs in deriving each organ (indriya) from one of the great elements. Further, whereas Īśvarakṛṣṇa derives each great element simply from one subtle element--ākāśa from sound, etc.--Formula I treats each great element as a molecule consisting of from one to five subtle elements. Ākāśa (ether, space) consists of sound; wind of sound and the touchable; fire of sound, touchable and visible; water of sound, touchable, visible and taste; and earth of sound, touchable, visible, taste and smell. Vaiśeṣika considers the sense-qualities as inhering in the substances of the great elements, but does not, like this form of Sāṅkhya, consider that the properties constitute the substance.

This Sāṅkhya solution is elegant and economical. It avoids the problem of inherence in which the Vaiśeṣikas became embroiled. Like Abhidharma it dispenses with the distinction between substance and quality, but escapes the reduction of the great elements to abstract forces into which Vasubandhu was driven by his

29. J.A.B. Van Buitenen, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 35.

30. Compare Empedocles' theory of perception, G.S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

31. Chinese text in Taisho 25, 545c17-19. Cf. Ryusho Hikata, *Surikrāntavikrāmi-pariprcchā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, Fukuoka, Japan: published by Committee of Commemoration Program for Dr. Hikata, 1958, p. lxx.

difficulty in relating the physical elements to the sense-qualities.

Formula I, though, gets into trouble by deriving each sense from a physical element--hearing from ākāśa (ether, sky), touch from wind, sight from fire, taste from water, and smelling from earth. This seems quite reasonable at first glance. Sensation is caused by the presence of a special form of a physical element in the sense-organ. However, if the elements consist of bundles of sense-qualities, then each sense except hearing should perceive several sense-qualities. If fire consists of visible, sound and touchable, then the eye should see, hear and touch.

Formula II, that occurs in a commentary on the Sāṅkhya-Kārikā,<sup>32</sup> derives two items--a great element (mahābhūta) and an organ (indriya)--from each of the subtle elements (tanmātras). (See Fig. 9) This avoids the objection raised in the previous paragraph, but sacrifices the elegant explanation of the great elements as complexes of subtle elements.

Īśvarakṛṣṇa derives the organs (indriyas) directly from the I-sayer (ahaṁkāra), thus sacrificing the explanation of sense-perception as contact between genetically cognate elements. (See Fig. 6) He derives each great element from just one subtle element, in agreement with Formula II. His reason for preferring a seemingly weaker theory is that by so doing he was able to work out an explanation in terms of the three guṇas (strands) that is in conflict with an explanation through the sense-qualities and physical elements. We shall return to this point when presenting the guṇa theory. (See below)

The three versions of classical Sāṅkhya all agree in deriving each of the subtle elements (tanmātras) separately from the I-sayer (ahaṁkāra). In earlier Sāṅkhya, the great elements (mahābhūtas), that occupied this rank, were derived in series starting from the mind (manas). Buddhist and Vaiśeṣika influence probably accounts for this conversion of a vertical derivation into a horizontal fanning-out. A concomitant is that mind (manas) loses its role as an evolvent principle and becomes a mere evolute. Formula II simply does not mention manas, but Formula Ia<sup>33</sup> includes it among the eleven organs (indriyas) and derives it from the great elements, though it does not say from which one or ones. This makes manas (mind) quite physical, an interesting consequence which Īśvarakṛṣṇa avoids by deriving it directly from the I-sayer (ahaṁkāra). He combines the earlier view that it is a psychic principle with the later opinion that it is an organ, saying that it partakes of the nature both of the organs of cognition and of those of action, and that furthermore it is a member of the psychic triad (buddhi, ahaṁkāra, manas).<sup>34</sup>

32. Taisho 54, 1245c3ff., R. Hikata, op. cit., p. lxv.

33. Pai-lun, Taisho 170c13.

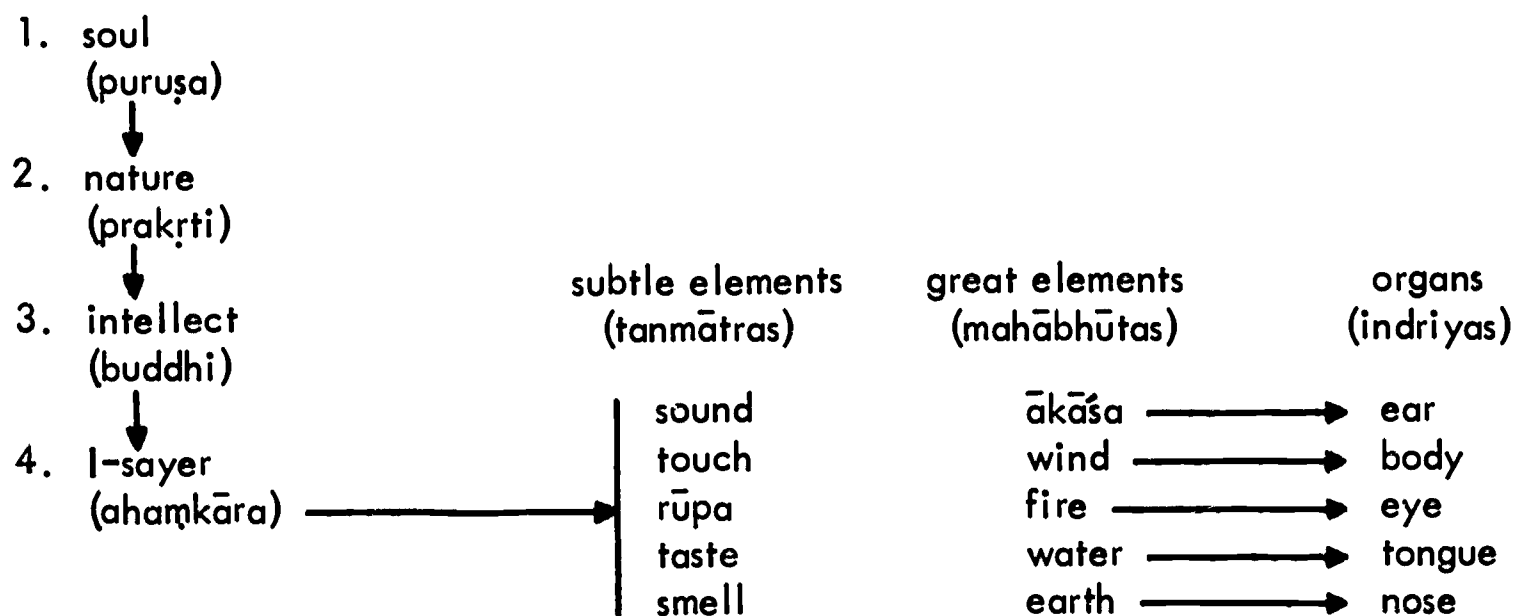
34. Sāṅkhya-kārikā 27, 33, S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., pp. 435, 437.



Figure 8: Another Sāṅkhya Emanation-schema

Formula I

Ta-chih-tu-lun, Taisho 25, 546c17-29; Hikata, p. lxx



Derivation of great elements from subtle elements:

sound → ākāśa (ether, space)  
 sound and touch → wind  
 sound, touch and rūpa (form) → fire  
 sound, touch, rūpa (form) and taste → water  
 sound, touch, rūpa (form), taste and smell → earth

Formula Ia

Pai-lun, Taisho 30, 170c13

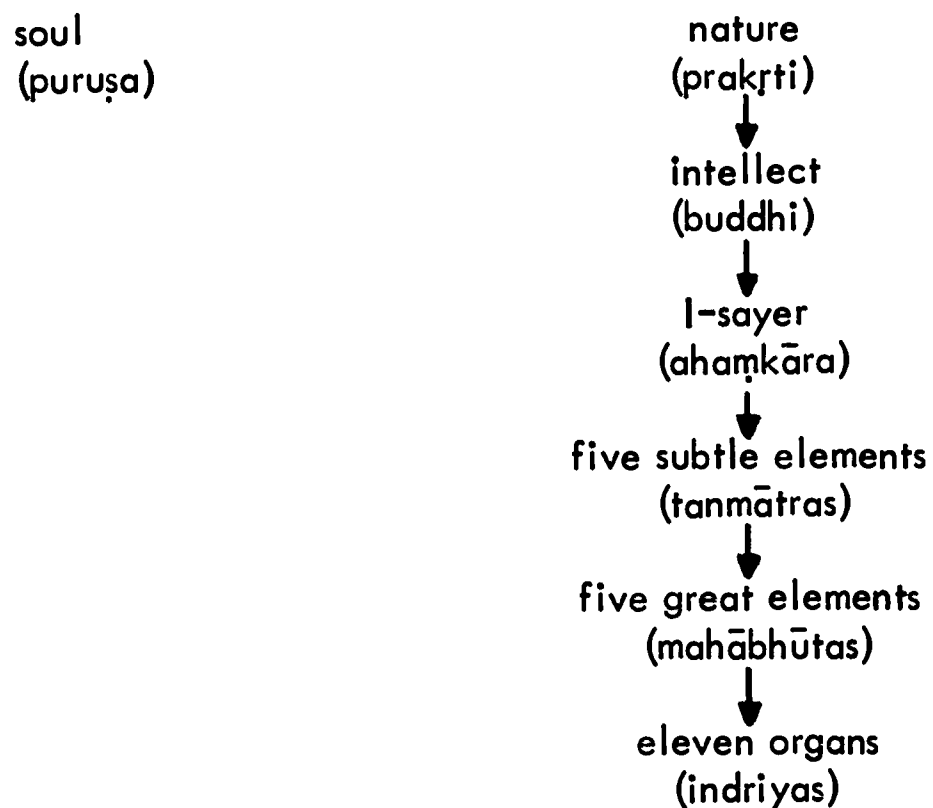


Figure 9: Yet Another Sāṅkhya Emanation-schema

Formula II

Taisho 54, 1245c3 ff.

Commentary on 'The Golden Seventy' (Sāṅkhya-kārikā)

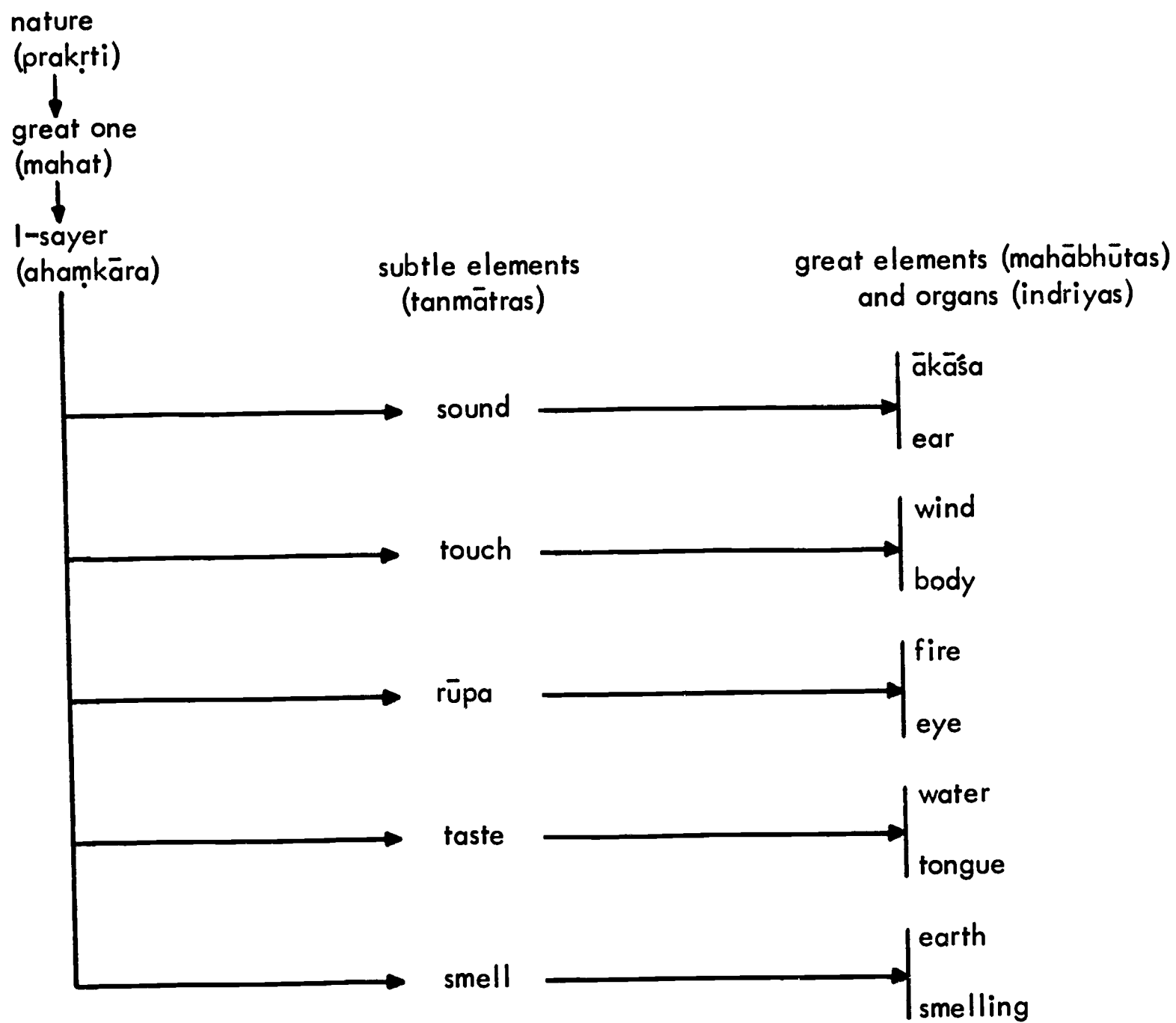


Figure 10: An Archaic Element-list  
Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.5.12 and 2.4.11

skin - touches

nose - smells

tongue - tastes

eye - rūpas

ear - sounds

= cognitive organs (buddhi-indriyas) and their sense fields (viṣayas)

mind - intentions  
(manas) (samkalpa)

heart - knowledges  
(hṛdaya) (vidyā)

hands - actions

genital - delights  
(ānanda)

anus - excretions

feet - locomotions

speech - the Vedas

= action organs (karma-indriyas) and their functions

The displacement of *manas* (mind) is also perhaps due to Buddhist and Vaiśeṣika influence. For the Buddhists it is an organ (see Fig. 4), on the same level as the five outward senses. For the Vaiśeṣikas, *manas* is an atomic primal substance, on the same level as the great elements. *Manas*, however, occurs in an Upaniṣadic list together with the five sense-organs and their objects, the five action-organs and their functions, and the heart.<sup>35</sup> (See Fig. 10) This passage makes the heart the seat of knowledge, (a function that Sāṅkhya locates in the intellect-will or *buddhi*) and makes *manas* (mind) the seat of intention (*saṃkalpa*), which function it retains in practically all later Indian psychologies. It is not impossible that Īśvarakṛṣṇa and his contemporaries knew the Upaniṣadic passage and were influenced by it, particularly since they retained the Upaniṣad's archaic and crude list of the five organs of action--voice, hands, feet, anus and genitals. By classical times, medical science was well advanced, the internal organs of the body were well known and to some extent understood, and general theories of bodily processes had rendered obsolete the quaint archaic notion that a separate organ (*indriya*), a sort of resident god, operated each of these five external organs. The Sāṅkhya school kept this old list partly perhaps for symmetry and because the number 'twenty-five' had become hallowed for the *tattvas* (principles), but also because the list of action-organs had such a venerable past.

Vasubandhu explicitly refutes the claim that there are five organs of action.<sup>36</sup> He argues: The voice does not rule speech, because language is learned rather than inborn; babies who certainly have a voice nonetheless do not speak. Hand and foot do not rule grasping and walking, which are simply position-changes of the bodily parts. Excretion is not ruled by a special organ, but is caused by the pressure of the wind element internally and the natural downward movement of heavy substances. There is no genital organ that rules erotic pleasure; the physical organs simply experience a pleasurable tactile sensation. Also, why not count the throat, the teeth, the eyelids, the finger-joints, etc. as organs of action, if you count the hands and feet?

For Vasubandhu, bodily processes are strictly physical, resulting from the interaction of the four forces (supporting, cohering, cooking and impelling) to which he reduces the great elements (*mahābhūtas*). For Īśvarakṛṣṇa, the equivalent forces are the three universal qualities or *guṇas* (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*), and he could just as well have explained all bodily acts as the *guṇas* operating in the great elements. Then he could have dispensed with the five organs of action.

Vasubandhu, for his part, retains two curious items from early Abhidharma,

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35. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.4.11, p. 199, 4.5.12, p. 284; E. H. Johnston, *Early Sāṅkhya*, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1937, p. 19.

36. *Abhidharmakośa*, ii.112, 113.



namely the female organ and the male organ. The more primitive Theravāda Abhidharma lists them as separate dharmas under the heading of form (rūpa). Vasubandhu says that they are just part of the body-organ which is the ruler of touch. Like it, they know the tactile. But they deserve special mention because they determine general differences of the person, distinguishing masculine from feminine in shape, voice, gesture and inclinations.<sup>37</sup>

#### E. Soul in the Cosmos and Person

The factor-list cited from the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad is clearly an inventory of the parts of man as a phenomenal, psycho-physical person. So are the other archaic formulas--the Buddhist skandhas, spheres (āyatanas) and elements (dhātus), and such emanation chains as the proto-Sāṃkhya one in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad. The texts, though, are vague on many points that seem crucial to a modern reader. Why do inventories of the parts of man shade over into cosmological statements? Do the terms in these lists refer to universal substances that are somehow divided up into individuals, or are they merely classes to which all the individuals designated by the term belong by virtue of resembling each other? And in the emanation-chains, does the cause pass its substance over into the derivative, or does it merely support the manifestation of the effect? That is, do the higher factors become transformed into the lower ones, or do they merely occasion them?

Early archaic thought was cosmological and anthropomorphic. The world was conceived as a huge person, living and organic, self-creating and self-existent, coming into being through differentiation and going out of being by merging back into the undifferentiated state. At this period, 'being' (sat) meant 'solid, reified', and 'non-being' (asat) meant 'unsolid, unreified'.<sup>38</sup> Phenomenal beings are differentiated condensations and concrete individuates of the cosmic person-stuff. They reproduce on a microcosmic scale the composition and structure of the macro-cosm.

The Upaniṣads called this hylozoic world-stuff Brahman, and unequivocally stated that everything is made of it. In this way they formulated the problem of causation chiefly as that of identifying the universal material cause, which they took to be also the ultimate efficient cause of everything. Thus substance is endowed by its very nature with energy, and the subtler the form of substance, the greater its power. The three properties of Brahman are stated to be 'being' (sat), consciousness (cit) and bliss (ānanda).<sup>39</sup> These terms are of uncertain meaning, and later Vedānta

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37. Ibid., ii.108.

38. J.A.B. Van Buitenen, "Studies in Sāṃkhya (III)", Journal of the American Oriental Society, LXXVII, 2 (1957), p. 104.

39. Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.1.1, p. 541; 2.6.1, p. 547; 2.7.1, p. 549.

thinkers had plenty of scope to impose on the Upaniṣad a definition of their choice. It is clear, nonetheless, that the Brahman of the Upaniṣads is animate, not only a substance but a living, thinking substance.

A group of functions belonging to mind in a vague sense occasioned considerable confusion at the beginnings of Indian thought, and constituted an enduring core of problems throughout the classical period. What is it that transmigrates? What is the knowing subject that cognizes the sense-objects? Is cognition or consciousness identical with the knowing subject, or distinct from it? Is the knowing subject also an agent, that is, does it perform cognitive and volitional acts, or is it a mere passive witness? What or who is it that experiences pleasure and pain, good and bad retribution?

The Materialists asserted that the life-principle (jīva) is not distinct from the body. The Buddhists refused to posit a life-principle (jīva or Ātman). All the other schools held that there is at least one psychic principle that has reality apart from the body. The usual reasoning for affirming such an entity was the old scientific rule followed in ancient Greece and medieval Europe as well, that each regularity observed in the world is to be explained by ascribing it to an inherent principle. This antique idea lingers on to the present day in the Cartesian concept of mind as a substance, which Gilbert Ryle felt obliged to refute at book length, calling it 'the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine.'<sup>40</sup> The Buddhist theory of life and transmigration is a process-and-pattern one, quite similar in certain respects to modern scientific descriptions (as opposed to ancient ascriptions).<sup>41</sup> It axiomatically rejects the rule that a substance must underlie every process. Classical Indian opposition and modern Western bafflement to the Buddhist *nairātmya* (no-soul) doctrine miss the mark because they fail to recognize that the disagreement lies in the axioms rather than the theorems, and that the Buddhist axiom is neither more nor less arbitrary than the contradictory one that every process must occur in an enduring substance.

The nature of the soul was one of the most disputed points among the śramaṇa sects c. 500 B.C. The issue was the efficacy of religious action, whether the individual continued beyond this life. The śramaṇas were concerned not merely with survival but with justice, and since for them the unit of moral responsibility was the individual rather than the family or tribe, it was necessary that he who reaps the retribution should be the same as he who committed the deed. A collective, un-individuated world-soul like the Upaniṣadic Brahman did not satisfy this demand for

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40. Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind, New York: Barnes and Noble (paperback), 1961, pp. 11-24 (first ed. 1949).

41. Julian Huxley, Knowledge, Morality and Destiny, New York: Mentor Book, 1957, p. 242.

just recompense. Thus the doctrine of the individual as a transmigrating moral entity arose.

In the sixth century B.C., commerce, individual property in land, and politico-economic individualism were on the rise in the central Ganges area. Buddhism and Jainism the two chief śramaṇa religions, were popular among the two most individualistic classes--the merchants and the princes--whose ideological needs they served.<sup>42</sup> Moral individualism thus appears as an extension of social individualism, and the transmigrant person is a moral counterpart of the legal person.

Jainism affirms that there are discrete, everlasting individual souls (jīva), and Buddhism denies it. The two religions agree, though, that the individual who experiences retribution in an after-life is the same as the one who committed the deed, and they agree that there is no collective world-soul.

The Upaniṣads are not much concerned with justice and retribution, so they do not deal with the problem how the individual soul can be distinct from the world-soul for purposes of retribution, yet identical with it in substance and nature. The classical Vedānta school belatedly faced the problem posed a millenium earlier by the non-Vedic sects. Perhaps what finally moved them was that Sāṅkhya, cradled in the Upaniṣadic tradition and foremost philosophical strand in the popular brāhmaṇism of the late Mahābhārata and early Purāṇas, in its classical form gave up the earlier concept of a single world-soul and affirmed a plurality of ultimately distinct individual souls.

The reason for this development in Sāṅkhya is probably the same as for changes in the Sāṅkhya theories of the senses and their objects--compelling criticism from the pluralists, principally the Buddhists and Vaiśeṣikas. Īśvarakṛṣṇa argues that there must be a plurality of souls, because otherwise (if the soul were one and the same in all) whatever happened to one person would happen to all, and all persons would be identical, since all would inherit identical retribution.<sup>43</sup> This is a familiar pluralist argument with well-attested Buddhist ancestry. It does not fit well into the Sāṅkhya system, and Śaṅkara trenchantly refutes it. As the soul (puruṣa) is not an agent according to Īśvarakṛṣṇa, it cannot be the doer of deeds, and so when it transmigrates it is being unjustly punished.<sup>44</sup> But this Sāṅkhya soul is immutable and unaffected by deeds, so really it cannot be adduced as the entity that bears retribution.<sup>45</sup>

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42. D. D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1956, pp. 154-162.

43. Sāṅkhya-kārikā 18; S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 432.

44. C. Sharma, op. cit., p. 243.

45. Śaṅkara's commentary on the Brahma-Sūtras, 2.2.10, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 34, pp. 378-379.

Soul-pluralism is a liability rather than an asset to Sāṅkhya, and only a misguided acquiescence to his opponents' criticisms could have led Īśvarakṛṣṇa to adopt it.

Classical Sāṅkhya de-hyphenated the world-soul Brahman into world (prakṛti) and souls (puruṣa). The world-stuff (prakṛti, pradhāna) became inanimate, animated extrinsically by the catalytic effect of the souls. This relationship is compared to the cooperation of a blind person (prakṛti) carrying a lame person (puruṣa). The similitude is all too clear; the theory is blind and lame.<sup>46</sup> This lamentable result follows from the ill-advised introduction of soul-pluralism into a monistic emanation system of the Upaniṣadic type.

Vaiśeṣika posits two psychic substances, the soul (Ātman) and the mind (manas). There are countless souls, each independent, everlasting and all-pervasive. The existence of the soul is known because the pronoun 'I' has a meaningful and definite reference.<sup>47</sup> Plurality of souls is so because what happens to one does not happen to another.<sup>48</sup> The soul has six properties--cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion and volition--that occur in it but are not always present in it. Thus the soul in deep sleep is not conscious of objects, yet the soul remains. It may seem curious that cognition should be treated as a property (guṇa) rather than an action (karma), but Vaiśeṣika defines action as strictly physical, so that knowledge, etc. are excluded from the category. This makes the Vaiśeṣika psychology somewhat passive.

Mind (manas) is quite simply a sense that perceives inner objects--the six mental properties and their combinations. Here Vaiśeṣika agrees with Buddhism, though it differs in making manas an atomic substance. In addition, the Vaiśeṣika mind (manas) acts as a link between the external senses and the soul, paying attention to one and only one sense at a time. Vaiśeṣika maintains, rather strangely, that one cannot perceive simultaneously in more than one sense-mode. Hence it maintains that the manas (mind) is atomic and partless. Each soul has one manas. This produces a double-decker pluralism, each soul leading a mind along with it.

The obvious objection is that if cognition, etc. are just properties of the soul, minding (manas) might as well be so classed, too, rather than as a separate substance. The more general objection is that postulating substances as the substrata for processes is an arbitrary and dangerous procedure, because if it is granted that one substance can have several functions, some special reason is needed to justify the allocation of functions to the postulated substances; while if it is contended that one substance can have only one function, the concept of substance loses its chief

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46. Sāṅkhya-kārikā 21; S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 433.

47. Vaiśeṣika Sūtras, 3.2.9-18; S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 392.

48. Ibid., 3.2.20; Ibid., p. 393.



utility, namely that of being the enduring substratum of transient events.

The great merit of Vaiśeṣika is that it attempts to account for the world strictly as observed, and that it adheres quite conscientiously to the rule that no more entities shall be postulated than are necessary to explain the facts (Occam's razor). It dispenses with two of the four psychic entities held by Sāṅkhya; its Ātman corresponds to Sāṅkhya puruṣa (soul) plus buddhi (intellect-will), and it dispenses with ahaṁkāra (I-sayer). It keeps knowing, subjecthood, affective experience and transmigrating united in the soul, and so does not have to resort like classical Sāṅkhya to the concept of a subtle body (liṅga), a consortium of buddhi, ahaṁkāra, and the subtle elements that transmigrates, carries karmic dispositions, but does not acquire new experiences.<sup>49</sup> Sāṅkhya never distinguished clearly between substance and property, and so it was driven eventually to deprive soul of almost all the functions that make the concept useful, distributing these functions among other entities ill suited to bear them.

The earliest Buddhist view on transmigration appears to have been that it is consciousness (vijñāna) that transmigrates. This, though, is not an immutable substance, or even a substance that undergoes modification in the manner of the Vaiśeṣika Ātman, but a series of events like the flame of a lamp.

Some Hīnayāna sects affirmed an intermediate being (antarābhava) consisting of five skandhas (factors) that passes over the interval between death and rebirth.<sup>50</sup> Others denied that there is an intermediate being and held that rebirth followed immediately after death. In either case, the series remains unbroken, so there is no need for a soul to explain the process.

#### F. The Whole and the Parts

This problem was first raised by the Buddhists, in connection with the relation between soul and body. Which constituent of man is his person? Is it form, feeling, conception, dispositions, or consciousness? They deny that it is any one of these, and they deny that there is anything else that might be the person. Is there then no person? They adduce the simile of the chariot. It has no existence apart from the tongue, the axle, the wheels and the body, and yet people say there is a chariot. Similarly the person is just an aggregate of the five factors (skandha), no one of which is permanent. The whole is unreal because it is composite, and whatever is composite is impermanent, and by definition whatever is impermanent is unreal.

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49. Sāṅkhya-kārikā 39-42; S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., pp. 438-439.

50. Abhidharmakośa, iii.31-34.

But the parts themselves are composed of parts, so they are not real, either.

For the early Buddhists, nirvāṇa is non-composite, permanent and consequently real.<sup>51</sup> Some sects also accepted that ākāśa (ether) is real, because it is not made up of parts and so is indestructible. Neither nirvāṇa nor ether, though, is an energy-bearing substance underlying and animating impermanent things. Buddhist nirvāṇa is not the Upaniṣadic Brahman. Causation in Buddhism is not a manifestation or modification of a monistic world-stuff, as in Vedānta or Sāṅkhya, and not the combination of everlasting elements, as in Vaiśeṣika. It is the patterned and invariable sequence of impermanent and composite things, a certain combination always being followed by the same result. Events are caused by other events.

The Kaṭha Upaniṣad employs the simile of the chariot to a different purpose, namely to illustrate a proto-Sāṅkhya plan of the world-and-person. There the chariot is the body, the Ātman (self) is the lord of the chariot, and so on.<sup>52</sup> This Upaniṣad is later than the Buddha, but it does not come to grips with the Buddhist objection: Is the soul identical with the psycho-physical organism, or different? If it is identical, then there is really no soul, since nothing exists over and above the mind-body aggregate (there is no chariot over and above the components). If it is different, then it must be permanent (since everything impermanent is included in mind-body). Whatever is permanent is immutable, so virtue and vice cannot change the condition of the soul, and there is no moral causation, a conclusion that is abhorrent to us and ought to be abhorrent to you.

The Gītā, later than Kaṭha Upaniṣad, still does not face up to the Buddhist objection. It commands Arjuna to slay the body since the soul neither slays nor is slain.<sup>53</sup> This is tantamount to denying that moral causation affects the soul. But the Gītā also holds that God is the cause of the cosmos, both of souls and of matter. Thus God, souls and matter are in some sense identical, and yet what happens to matter does not happen to souls or God. Later Vedānta philosophers inherited the problem and grappled with it in various ingenious ways.

### G. The Grounds of Certitude

Late archaic thinkers formulated an explicit theory of verifiers (pramāṇa), the sources or guarantees of valid knowledge. The typical list includes observation (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna) and testimony (śabda). This list is accepted by

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51. Edward Conze (ed.), Buddhist Texts through the Ages, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1954, pp. 94-95.

52. Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 1.3.3-9, pp. 623-624.

53. Bhagavad Gītā 2.19-25.

Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Vedānta. Vaiśeṣika and some Buddhists reject testimony, since it is not self-authenticating but requires observation and inference to determine its reliability. Nyāya adds analogy (upamāna), which some other schools treat as a variety of inference rather than as a separate pramāṇa. Later Mīmāṃsā affirms six pramāṇas--the four of Nyāya, plus presumption (arthāpatti) and non-perception (anupalabkhi). Observation is commonly divided into that of ordinary people and that of the saints (yogi-pratyakṣa). Testimony may be that of an expert person or of the scriptures. The Vedas are testimony for the āstikas (orthodox) but not for the nāstikas (heterodox). The Buddhists and the Jains accept their own scriptures as testimony (āgama), but not the scriptures of other faiths.

The pramāṇa (verifier) theory rendered explicit one problem of the foundations of philosophy that had vexed the debates of the entire archaic period. Giving this problem a name and formulating the disagreements marked a step forward but did not in itself afford a solution. The classical philosophers wrestled perennially with the question: what knowledge guarantees both itself and other knowledge? This is identical in abstract form with the ontological question: what entity limits all things including itself?

The early Upaniṣads had trusted in speculative reason (tarka), and had not appealed for proof to the authority of earlier scriptures. Middle Upaniṣads such as the Kaṭha introduce yogic techniques, appeal to yogi-pratyakṣa (observation) and deny that reason (tarka) can attain the ultimate truth which, however, is 'seen' by the 'seers of the subtle' with their apical intelligence, and which they then teach to qualified initiants.<sup>54</sup> The initiate should then practice yoga and verify the teaching with his own yogic observation.<sup>55</sup>

Early Buddhism agreed with the Kaṭha Upaniṣad that certainty was to be attained through darśana (seeing) rather than tarka (speculative reasoning). Nevertheless, the Buddhists did not deny the validity of tarka for certain purposes and when rightly used. They were especially fond of using it against other schools, a fact that may account as much as the subtlety of the Ātman for the insistence of the later Upaniṣads that it cannot be known through tarka (speculative reasoning). As Kaufmann remarks:

The claim of ineffability expresses a negation--sometimes of one's own power to communicate; sometimes of the questioner's power to understand; and sometimes of the profundity of theology. The claim is essentially critical and belongs to critical ages. What is decisive is not that the experience is mystical but that it is subjected to persistent unsympathetic questions. Where that condition is met, the

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54. Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 1.2.9, p. 610; 1.3.12, p. 627.

55. Ibid., 1.3.13-15, pp. 627-629.

concluding line can always be: not this! not that! <sup>56</sup>

The Vedic tradition accordingly divided into those who were willing to tackle the problems the Buddhists posed, and those who were not. Those who were, laid the groundwork of the realist āstika darśanas (orthodox systems of philosophy). Those who were not, became the wallflowers of Indian philosophy, sitting out the debates for seven centuries and hugging their ineffable truths to themselves.

A presupposition of the classical systems is that many things worth knowing are to be known through observation and inference, and that rational means suffice to find and prove solutions to most important questions. Archaic philosophy consisted chiefly of speculation and conceptual invention. There were arguments, to be sure, but they were more commonly aimed at destroying the opponents' theses than at proving one's own. Constructive rational philosophy emerged gradually in the late archaic period. It involved the combination of logical procedures with appeals to observation, definition of terms and crystallizing a technical vocabulary, agreement between opposing schools as to axioms, and construction of systems that claimed to be 'grammars of the cosmos', accounting for it completely and with demonstrable certainty.

The radical qualitative change may be seen by comparing the Gītā (c. 200 B.C.) with Nāgārjuna and the Sāṅkhya Kārikā (c. 200 A.D.). Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā does not really prove anything to Arjuna, he merely dogmatizes and reveals. Appeals to observation are sporadic and haphazard. A high proportion of the few inferential proofs are fallacious. Only a few terms (such as yoga) are defined, and though there is a sizable technical vocabulary, it is not well systematized. The early classical philosophers, as we shall see, exhibit immeasurably greater clarity, consistency and coherence.

#### H. Time, Place and Relations

The early Vaiśeṣikas seem to have been the first to treat time as one of the primary substances. In the early archaic tradition there was much thought about the year and the cosmic year (the cycle of creation), but neither in early Buddhism nor in early Sāṅkhya nor in Upaniṣadic Vedānta is the nature of time considered critically. For Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, time is an all-pervasive, partless substance that stretches from the endless past through the present and endlessly into the future. It is not an observed entity but an inferred one; if there were no time, we could have no memories of the past and no anticipations of the future.

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56. op. cit., p. 323.



The early Buddhists admitted no all-pervasive things except space (*ākāśa*) and consciousness (*viññāna*).<sup>57</sup> Further, they denied that anything that is limited in space can be unlimited in time (that is, permanent). Consequently, when the late archaic scholastics got around to considering the problem of time, they treated it as composite and analyzed it into a series of moments--one present, and an infinity past and future. They defined a moment (*kṣaṇa*) as the smallest fraction of observable time that possesses duration--a temporal infinitesimal. By thus treating time as atomic, they ran into the same difficulty that the Vaiśeṣikas incurred with their atoms. Nāgārjuna objected: If X has extension, then it has parts and is divisible. Thus you cannot call it infinitesimal. If it has no extension, then several X's cannot combine to form an extended aggregate, since the sum of any number of nothings is always a nothing.<sup>58</sup>

Several gambits were used in the attempt to overcome the objection. The Vaiśeṣikas posited a special category called inherence (*samavāya*) which is simply the relation whereby substances and properties are held together. A substance must have a locus in space. But properties have no locus apart from substances. Thus, though it is absurd that two substances should occupy the same space, it is admissible that one property should inhere in two or more substances. This category was then extended so as to apply to the relation between atoms and molecules.<sup>59</sup>

Some Vaiśeṣikas contended that size is a quality that emerges with number, that two atoms have a minute magnitude by virtue of their twoness rather than of their atomhood. This excellent gambit led to trouble because the Vaiśeṣikas held that numbers above one are dependent on the mind. The number of a combination of atoms is due to relational cognition. In the cosmic interlude when there are no ordinary minds embodied, atoms could not combine to start the new creation unless some extra-cosmic mind perceived them. Therefore these Vaiśeṣikas concluded that God must exist. This is the *deus ex machina* stratagem familiar in European idealism.<sup>60</sup> For Vaiśeṣika, it created further problems, since God was a rival to the two other ruler-principles--*adṛṣṭa* and inherence--already established in the system.

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57. 'Endlessness of *ākāśa*' and 'endlessness of *viññāna*' are the fourth and fifth of the ascending series of releases. E.J. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

58. *Madhyamaka-kārikā*, ch. 7, in Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*, transl. by Jacques May, Paris: Maisonneuve, 1959, pp. 106-142.

59. N. Smart, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-95.

60. For example, Berkeley maintained that material objects exist only through being perceived. To the objection that, in that case, a tree would cease to exist if no one was looking at it, he replied that God always perceives everything. See Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945, pp. 647-648.

The Sarvāstivādins defended themselves not by positing a pervasive entity to tie their time-atoms together, since other Buddhists were not prepared to accept a form of pervasive time, but by sticking to their thesis that moments are the smallest units into which time can be divided, but not the smallest units out of which time is built up. They in effect denied that the process of division can be carried on ad infinitum.

The early Abhidharma lists consisted of dharmas (elemental force-factors), that were thing-surrogates rather than relations, forces rather than categories. Relational laws such as dependent arising (pratītya-samutpāda), and universal characteristics such as impermanence, were not included among the dharmas. Sarvāstivāda added a new heading, the dispositions dissociated from mind (citta-viprayukta-saṃskāra) under which they ranged fourteen terms that did not fit elsewhere in the chart. (See Fig. 7). One of these dharmas is similarity (sabhāgatā, sharingness), that is simply the Vaiśeṣika category of generality (sāmānya).<sup>61</sup> The Sautrāntikas rejected this and other mind-dissociated dharmas, contending that they were only designations, ways of speaking (prajñapti), not real entities (dravya). The four marks of conditioned things--arising, abiding, decay and cessation--are really marks or attributes (lakṣaṇa, guṇa) of dharmas, and by treating them as dharmas the Sarvāstivādins incurred a difficulty that Nāgārjuna exploited. He says: If each momentary dharma has three phases--arising, abiding and ceasing--then the arising should have arising (which the Sarvāstivādin grants), but the arising of arising should also have arising, and so on ad infinitum. This infinite regress is inadmissible.<sup>62</sup>

The Sarvāstivādins reply that the sub-marks do not have sub-sub-marks but that the marks and sub-marks effect each other. (See Fig. 11) Each mark effects the main dharma, the other three marks, and the four sub-marks. Each sub-mark effects only the corresponding mark. This defense would be more persuasive to a Vaiśeṣika, who admits that a property can reside in more than one substance, than to a Mādhyamika, who denies that this is so. But though clearly distinguishing properties from substances, as the Vaiśeṣikas do, would have solved the problem, it would have done away with the sub-marks (as a guṇa does not have guṇas) and would have conceded the Sautrāntika objection that these marks are not dharmas.

Vasubandhu was not only the supreme master of Abhidharma but, after his conversion to Mahāyāna, the co-architect with his brother Asaṅga of the Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda school. They added nine items to the list of mind-dissociated dharmas (see Fig. 12), and declared this whole class to be designations rather than real-things.

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61. Padmanabh Jaini, "Origin and development of the theory of viprayukta-saṃskāras," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, XXII, 3 (1959), p. 537.

62. See note 58.

Figure 11: The Sarvāstivādin Marks of the Conditioned

Abhidharmakośa ii. 224-226, and  
Richard H. Robinson, Early Mādhyamika in India and China, pp. 256-258.

| main dharma (force-factor) |               |                              |
|----------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| marks                      | 1. arising    | 1a. arising of arising       |
|                            | 2. abiding    | 2a. abiding of abiding       |
|                            | 3. alteration | 3a. alteration of alteration |
|                            | 4. cessation  | 4a. cessation of cessation   |
|                            |               | sub-marks                    |

1 effects main dharma, 2, 3, 4, 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a.

1a effects 1.

2 effects main dharma, 1, 3, 4, 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a.

2a effects 2.

3 effects main dharma, 1, 2, 4, 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a.

3a effects 3.

4 effects main dharma, 1, 2, 3, 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a.

4a effects 4.

Figure 12: The Hundred Dharmas (Elemental Force-Factors) of Buddhist Viññānavāda

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. mind<br>(citta)                        | eye-viññāna, ear-viññāna, nose-viññāna, tongue-viññāna<br>body-viññāna, mano-viññāna, manas, ālaya-viññāna  |
| 2. mentals<br>(caitasika)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) general: contact, feeling, volition, conception, attention</li> <li>b) special: wish, resolve, memory, concentration, cognition</li> <li>c) good: faith, shame, remorse, non-greed, non-hatred,<br/>non-ignorance, energy, facility, vigilance, equanimity,<br/>non-injury</li> <li>d) defilement: lust, hostility, folly, pride, doubt, prejudice</li> <li>e) secondary defilement: anger, malice, disparagement, rivalry,<br/>jealousy, stinginess, deceit, dissimulation, injury, conceit,<br/>non-shame, non-remorse, frivolity, torpor, non-faith, laziness,<br/>negligence, false memory, distraction, non-cognition</li> <li>f) indeterminate: repentance, drowsiness, consideration,<br/>investigation</li> </ul> |
| 3. form<br>(rūpa)                         | eye, ear, nose, tongue, body<br>rūpa, sound, smell, taste, touch<br>rūpa belonging to the dharma-ayatana  |
| 4. mind-dissociated<br>(citta-viprayukta) | attainment, life-faculty, similarity, dissimilarity, thoughtless<br>trance, cessation trance, the thoughtless, name-collection,<br>sentence-collection, phoneme-collection, birth, abiding,<br>aging, impermanence, activity, distinction, conjunction,<br>speed, succession, location, time, number, combination,<br>differentiation   |
| 5. unconditioned<br>(asaṃskṛta)           | ākāśa, intentional cessation, non-intentional cessation,<br>immobile cessation, cessation of concepts and feelings,<br>suchness   |



It is apparent that the Buddhist category of designation (*prajñapti*) corresponds partially to the Vaiśeṣika one of property (*guṇa*). Two of the *guṇas*--number and conjunction--are among the nine dharmas (elemental force-factors) added by the Yogācārins. But the nine also include two Vaiśeṣika substances--time and place.<sup>63</sup>

Buddhists and Vaiśeṣikas alike gave prominence to the concept of relations, partly because their theories of causality were relational rather than modificational. For the Vaiśeṣikas, relations were real, and were included among the properties, not the substances. For the Buddhists, the ontological status of relations was problematic. In general, being real was equated with being a dharma (force-factor). The dharmas, though, were absolute simples, without extension or duration. A relation in the ordinary sense belongs to two entities and thus seems to span a distance or duration, which an atomic force-instant cannot so. It is the restriction of realness to dharmas that leads the Buddhists to classify relations as unreal, even though by the ordinary definition the relations are at least as real as the dharmas.

### I. Universals and Particulars

Archaic Indian thought was remarkably unconcerned with the question of classes and individuals. The problem seems to have been noticed first by the grammarians. Patañjali (c. 2nd cent. B.C.) discusses whether words designate the class or the individual, and concludes that they designate the class, because the word 'cow' indicates the species without restriction as to individual peculiarities such as color, because the word has the same reference whether used in the singular, dual or plural, and because even in the singular the command 'Do not kill a brāhmaṇ' means 'Do not kill any member of the class brāhmaṇ' and not 'Refrain from killing the brāhmaṇ so-and-so, but feel free to kill other brāhmaṇs.'<sup>64</sup>

The Nyāya Sūtra takes up the question, and argues that nouns refer alike to universals, individuals and configurations of attributes.<sup>65</sup> The individual (*vyakti*) is defined as that composite material body that is the receptacle of distinctive properties.<sup>66</sup> 'Configuration' is the particular arrangement of the parts of an object through which the universal and its characteristics are indicated. The universal is that which causes cognition of the sameness of diverse things and does not serve to differentiate several things from one another.<sup>67</sup>

63. P. Jaini, *op. cit.*, pp. 537-538.

64. Louis Renou, *Anthologie Sanscrite*, Paris: Payot, 1947, pp. 279-282.

65. *Nyāya Sūtra* 2.2.59-66; S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 369-370.

66. *Ibid.*, 2.2.67; *Ibid.*, p. 370.

67. *Ibid.*, 2.2.69; *Ibid.*, p. 370.

Two Vaiśeṣika categories, generality and particularity, are posited to account for the samenesses and differences between observed things. Generality is the defining characteristic shared by all members of a class. It resides in substance, property and action, but it cannot be subsumed under any other category, so it must be regarded as a separate entity. It is defined as 'permanent, single, and belonging to many'.<sup>68</sup> The most comprehensive universal is being (sat), which is the common trait of all observed objects. Less extensive genera are, for example, 'animalness', 'cowness' and 'blueness'.

Particularity (viśeṣa) characterizes the atoms and liberated souls and minds, which being non-composite, either non-extended or ubiquitous, and non-temporal would otherwise coalesce into identity. Ordinary composite individuals are differentiated by the differences of their parts, so the category of particularity differentiates them only indirectly by differentiating their ultimate constituents. The existence of this category is inferred from the individuality of observed things; it is a theoretical construct.

Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika held that generalities (universals) exist, though in substances and their properties and actions rather than as separate substances. Thus these schools can be called realist in something like the medieval European sense. The Buddhists, notwithstanding their differences among themselves, agreed that universals are not simply objective facts but mental constructions to which words correspond. What is perceived is particular; conception generalizes by more or less arbitrarily relating particulars to categories, an operation that involves memory, inference, supposition and imagination, and hence involves error. Thus the Buddhists are nominalists.

Classical Sāṅkhya is scarcely interested in the problem. It explains phenomenal diversity as due to different proportions of the three guṇas (properties). Īśvarakṛṣṇa says nothing about words and their reference, nothing about universals and their mode of being, and nothing about whether categories are objective perceivable facts or subjective interpretations that the mind imposes on percepta. Like most of the early and middle classical philosophers, he distinguishes between immediate non-conceptual (ni-vikalpaka) cognition, which is bare sense-perception, and conceptual (vikalpaka) cognition, which involves the synthetic operations of the inner organ (buddhi, ahaṁkāra and manas).<sup>69</sup>

We may speculate why Indian philosophy in its prime showed so little interest in a problem that has been central to the Western tradition ever since Plato. One reason may be that the early development of linguistic theory confined the problem

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68. C. Sharma, op. cit., p. 167.

69. Sāṅkhya-kārikā 28; S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 436.

to the relation between words and things and so prevented any reifying of 'forms' such as Plato perpetrated. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika treatment of substance, accident, universal and particular, is much clearer and much more pragmatic than Plato's theory of ideas.

Another reason may be that classical Indian civilization as a whole did not polarize the universal and the particular. The texts talk and the artists represent figures as if individual differences exist but are not too significant. An observer can learn what the word 'cow' means by seeing one cow; induction is straightforward, and error, if it happens, is easily corrected. An author can blithely generalize about the sexual behavior of the women of Maharashtra<sup>70</sup> without either he or his readers doubting the adequacy of his sample. Individual differences and exceptions are not dragooned into conformity, they are just disregarded. They are tolerated and degraded. This is not the climate of opinion in which theoretical science could be expected to prosper.

#### J. Axioms and Definitions

The arguments of the classical philosophers rest on a small number of axioms that are sometimes stated and sometimes left to the reader to supply. Most of these axioms were current by the late archaic period, and some of them appeared even earlier. The following list is illustrative rather than exhaustive.

1. The rule of the conservation of being: something does not come out of nothing, and something does not become nothing.

See Gītā 2.16: "Of the non-existent there is no coming to be; of the existent there is no ceasing to be." In the early archaic creation myths, being comes out of non-being. As we have seen, at that time 'non-being' meant 'subtle, unmanifested' rather than 'unreal'. But in the Gītā 'being' has come to mean 'non-contingent, permanent, possessing inalienable attributes.' The Buddhists refused to concede that anything unmanifested has being, while Sāṅkhya and Vedānta held that only the unmanifested possesses true being. A high proportion of the ontological disagreement between the schools is connected with their failure to discuss thoroughly the definition of 'being'.

2. To exist means to exist in space and time.

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70. Kāma Sūtra, (see ch. 1, n. 12), p. 110, "The women of Maharashtra are fond of practicing the sixty-four arts; they utter low and harsh words, and like to be spoken to in the same way, and have an impetuous desire of enjoyment."

This is the use of the word in most Buddhist texts and in some though not all contexts in non-Buddhist texts. That which is most real is eternal and ubiquitous, pervading time and space but not limited by them, or eternal and infinitesimal, equally unlimited by space. Examples are Brahman, and the Vaiśeṣika substances. Composite things were considered contingent rather than real; their decomposition and destruction is a possibility that sooner or later will be actualized. This definition is biased against phenomena. It devalues the temporal and changing, as did practically all ancient and medieval European philosophy.

3. Contradictory things cannot occupy the same place at the same time.

This is the logical rule of contradiction, and also a principle of physics. The stock similitude is, 'like light and darkness.' Rhetorical paradoxes abound in Indian religious literature, but the philosophers refuse to accept them as violations of the rule of contradiction.

4. Every effect has a cause; nothing happens without cause.

Some Materialists denied this rule and held that things just happen. As causality in metaphysics is connected in Indian thought with logical implication, these Materialists also denied that inference is a reliable means of knowledge. This placed them in a very poor position to argue, so their case never made much headway.

5. The cause must be like its effects.

It was usually conceded that the cause must also be different from its effects in some way, or cause and effect would coalesce into one thing. The problem was to decide in which ways the cause resembles its effect, and in which ways it differs. But there was no sure procedure for doing so, and consequently the numerous metaphysical arguments from effect to cause are unsound.

6. The existence of non-A implies the existence of A.

This is the counter-twin rule (pratidvandyin, pratiyogin). It corresponds to the European principle of the solidarity of opposites. Unless this rule is somehow restricted, it leads to much false metaphysics and quite a few absurdities, such as the proposition that if being exists then non-being must exist, which conclusion is against the rule of contradiction. A Nyāya opponent tries to trap Nāgārjuna with sophistries based on the counter-twin rule.<sup>71</sup> Nāgārjuna extricates himself skillfully, and in so doing

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71. Vigraha-vyāvartanī. Susumu Yamaguchi, "Pour écarter les vaines discussions," Journal Asiatique, 1929, pp. 1-86.



scores a new achievement in the history of Indian philosophy. Later Nyāya distinguished some predications that can only be negative, and some that can only be positive, from the more common ones that can be either positive or negative.

7. The agent and the object of an action cannot be identical.

Actions are necessarily transitive and non-reflexive. The eye cannot see itself, the fingertip cannot touch itself, the knife cannot cut itself, and a limited thing cannot limit itself. The postulation of an unlimited limiter is a corollary of this axiom. We have already seen how this assumption affected ethics and cosmology. It also played a cardinal role in debates on causation; if the cause is the agent and the effect is the object, then cause and effect must be different; but if they are of the same substance and character, they must be the same.

8. The unseen is to be known from the seen.

This affirms that theoretical knowledge by inference is possible even when the entity is imperceptible. All metaphysics and most science, in East and West, depend on this axiom. The difficulty lies in knowing what conclusions about the unseen are justified by the seen. For this, no mere rule suffices. The task calls for a methodical procedure of greater complexity and rigor than any known to the ancient world.

These axioms and definitions, and the others of their kind, are generalizations from common sense experience, true to no greater extent than the congruence between common sense and reality. They are imprecise, and not well qualified or defined. But no classical Indian philosopher attempted to formulate a complete axiomatic, or even to list, as Euclid and Spinoza do, the axioms on which he was going to base his theorems and proofs. The Indian grammarians distinguish definitions and system-rules (axioms) from content-rules (theorems). The philosophers would have profited greatly from doing likewise. They would have confronted integrally a difficulty which they failed to solve by ad hoc, unsystematic discussion of their axioms.

Yet it is too easy and unfair for a modern critic to charge these ancient thinkers with lack of system and rigor. Our philosophers may be superior in these respects, but the quality of present-day political discussion is certainly not, and many vital professions such as psychiatry have not yet put their conceptual houses in better order than did the classical schools of philosophy. The significant point is not that these old thinkers failed to achieve perfection, but that they travelled such a long way from the naive unreasoning condition in which most cultures have remained and in which until very recent times the masses were stalled in even the highest civilizations.

CHAPTER V

CLASSICAL INDIAN PHILOSOPHY - Part II

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## CLASSICAL INDIAN PHILOSOPHY - Part II

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### III. Some Highlights of Classical Philosophy

#### A. Preamble

The reader who expects to find in this chapter lists of the tenets of each author and school will be disappointed. Such information is valuable for those who can assimilate it, and perhaps even for those who feel that information is nutritive--whether assimilated or not.<sup>1</sup> The student who intends to become proficient in Indian philosophy will sooner or later have to learn 'the names and numbers of all the players'. There is no shortage, however, of data-digest treatments of the subject. Those with little time to spare should read the articles in James Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.<sup>2</sup> Those with time to read a whole book will be well served by S. Chatterjee and D. Datta's An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, a lucid and judicious digest of textbook information.<sup>3</sup> Anyone who wishes to make his own brief digest of school tenets may take C. Sharma's Indian Philosophy: A Critical Survey,<sup>4</sup> underline key sentences, and type them up in consecutive order. Despite shortcomings (for example, his chapters on Buddhism are weak), he resums quite adequately

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1. Arthur Koestler, The Lotus and the Robot, New York: Macmillan, 1961, p. 169: "A pretty hostess in a blue airline uniform appeared with a portable microphone to explain to us everything we saw... At this all the heads in the bus would turn in the indicated direction, and all eyes would assume that glazed stare which indicates the process of digesting information; for the Japanese believe in the nutritive value of information regardless of the subject--they ingest knowledge wholesale, as a boa swallows a rabbit."

2. Especially 8.235-237, "Madhyamaka" (L. de la Vallée Poussin), 8.648, "Mīmāṃsā" (R. Garbe), 9.422-424, "Nyāya" (R. Garbe), 10.572-574, "Rāmānuja" (A. B. Keith), 11.189-192, "Sāṅkhya" (R. Garbe), 12.568-570, "Vaiśeṣika" (R. Garbe), 12.595-596, "Vasubandhu" (U. Wogihara), 12.597-598, "Vedānta" (R. Garbe), 12.831-833, "Yoga" (R. Garbe).

3. Satischandra Chatterjee and Dhirendramohan Datta, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, Calcutta: U. of Calcutta, 6th ed., 1960 (first ed. 1939).

4. Chandradhar Sharma, Indian Philosophy: A Critical Survey, London: Rider, 1960. New York: Barnes and Noble (paperback), 1962.



Sāṅkhya (pp. 137-156), Yoga (pp. 157-162), Vaiśeṣika (pp. 163-178), Nyāya (pp. 179-198), Mīmāṃsā (pp. 199-226), Śāṅkara (pp. 240-277) and Rāmānuja (pp. 323-359). (His chapters on other varieties of Vedānta are passable.) Any-one who summarizes these seven chapters, consisting of 165 pages, will obtain for himself the basic data that I am not going to give in this chapter.

My concern is not with the contents of treatises and the theses of authors but with the course of the game, the main lines of philosophical dialogue from 200 to 1300 A.D., the encounter between thinkers and problems, the issues of philosophical history such as interaction, trends and phases, influences and causalities, connection between philosophical and cultural history, and evaluation of philosophical ideas as human artifacts rather than merely as products within their own narrow class. In this essay I am frankly attempting to do in a provisional and admittedly inadequate way what historians of European philosophy have been doing for a hundred and fifty years. No previous writer has to my knowledge tried to do this for Indian philosophy as a whole, though La Vallée Poussin<sup>5</sup> and Stcherbatsky<sup>6</sup> have tried to do it for Indian Buddhism.

Two recent books that work out limited aspects of the problem are recommended to the reader with solid philosophical training and stamina. Karl Potter<sup>7</sup> treats the mokṣa philosophies as the performance of players in a game with given objectives, resources and rules. This 'games' approach is a fruitful theoretical one, and has been applied successfully to group dynamics, national defence in the nuclear age, and philosophy of science. Wittgenstein with his 'language games' introduced the idea into philosophy and gave impetus to the search for a more adequate philosophy of philosophy.<sup>8</sup> Potter does much to make explicit what Indian philosophers thought the game was, how they played it, and how they judged each other's games.

Ninian Smart<sup>9</sup> aims to illuminate the way in which religious determinants have played a major part in Indian systematic metaphysics, and to exhibit some patterns of argument on specific philosophical topics.<sup>10</sup> His overall desire is to stimulate interest among culture-bound European philosophers who are too provincial even to

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5. L. de la Vallée Poussin, Nirvāṇa, Paris: Beauchesne, 1925.

6. Theodore Stcherbatsky, The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa, Leningrad: Academy of Sciences, 1927.

7. Karl H. Potter, Presuppositions of India's Philosophies, Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, New York: Harper Torch-books, 1965 (first ed. 1958), preface by Rush Rhees, pp. vii-xvi.

9. Ninian Smart, Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, London: Allen and Unwin, 1964.

10. op. cit., pp. 15-16.

learn the Sanskrit names of the philosophical schools and too fastidious to endure obscurity and imprecision in English-language works on Indian thought. The aim is as much to be applauded as the situation is to be deplored, and Smart's book shows persuasively that Indian philosophy is genuinely philosophical, and that Indian arguments on the existence of God, rebirth and the soul, epistemology, causation, induction and inference, are ingenious and instructive.

My objective is not to duplicate Smart's and Potter's work, though I borrow from them whenever it seems useful. Neither of them approaches the problem historically, which is what I have done in the preceding chapter and am going to do in this one. I am going to advance a theory about the development and decline of Indian philosophy. This theory is an imaginative construction, a cluster of hypotheses in various stages of confirmation. It is offered not as factual certitude but as a means of ordering and illuminating the material, as a tentative answer to some of the alert inquirer's questions, and as a basis for testing and modification.

## B. Classical Sāṅkhya

On pages 154 - 157 we saw the Sāṅkhya world-view evolve gradually by crystallization, elaboration and modification of certain elements in the Upaniṣadic tradition. Now let us examine the completed system as expounded by Īśvarakṛṣṇa.<sup>11</sup> He probably lived about 200 A.D. His sole work is the seventy stanzas of the Sāṅkhya-kārikā. It is brief, problematic, cryptic, and vague in many places. But the great merit of the text is that it is systematic in its arrangement and thoroughly rational in its approach. It gives inferential proofs for the central Sāṅkhya theses, and formal definitions for the key terms.

Prakṛti (the world-stuff, primal nature) is asserted to be imperceptible, not because it is non-existent but because it is too subtle for the senses to grasp. It is postulated to account for certain features of phenomena. Five arguments are advanced to prove that prakṛti exists.<sup>12</sup>

1) All individuate things have a specific size. Things do not limit themselves, and if things limit each other there ensues an endless regress. Since there would be no first limit, the series would be without foundation, which means that nothing would be limited. Therefore there must exist an unlimited entity that limits all limited things.

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11. Sāṅkhya-kārikā, S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., pp. 426-445; Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed.), Sources of Indian Tradition, New York: Columbia U. Press, 1958, pp. 308-315.

12. Sāṅkhya-kārikā 15, S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 430.

2) All things have some properties in common. They all consist of the three *guṇas*--*sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (turbulence) and *tamas* (inertia). Common properties imply a common substance. Therefore there must be one substance that is common to all things.

3) Activity stems from potential. There must have been some reservoir of potential before the world-process began, or there could have been no first act. Thus the primal source of potential must be an unmanifested cause.

4) There is a necessary distinction between cause and effect. Everything in the phenomenal world is an effect. So the world in the aggregate is an effect. An effect cannot be its own cause, so the world is not its own cause. But every effect has a cause. Therefore the manifested world must have an unmanifested cause.

5) At cosmic dissolution all effects merge back into their material cause. The lower *tattvas* or principles (see Fig. 6) merge into the higher ones from which they had originally emerged. But there must be a cause into which *buddhi* (intellect-will) or *maḥat*, the highest manifested thing, merges back. This cause must be unmanifest. But an unmanifest entity cannot merge back into anything. Therefore the unmanifest is the terminus of cosmic retraction.

Potential (*śakti*) in the third proof is that only some causes produce certain effects. Sesamum seed produces oil, but sand does not. Milk produces yogurt, but water does not. Rice grain produces rice sprouts, and nanny goats give birth to kids. Good deeds produce good retribution, and evil deeds produce evil recompense. There are several plausible explanations for this set of facts. One is that similar entities consist of similar elements organized in the same way. Another is that similar processes produce similar results--fermentation produces alcohol from a variety of substances, but no other process produces alcohol from those same substances. Sāṅkhya chooses yet another explanation: that the effect pre-exists in the material cause. This view is termed *satkāryavāda* (theory that the effect pre-exists in the cause), and the Sāṅkhya view is a specific variety called *pariṇāmavāda* (theory that the effect is a modification of the substance of the cause).

Īśvarakṛṣṇa gives five proofs for the theory that the effect pre-exists in the cause (*satkāryavāda*).<sup>13</sup> 1) A non-existent entity cannot be subjected to any operation, so the effect cannot be produced unless it already exists. 2) The cause must enter into relation with the effect, but a real thing cannot enter into relation with an unreal thing, so the effect must exist before the cause acts on it. 3) Unless a real connection exists between cause and effect, any cause might produce any effect--goats give birth to rice sprouts and rice grains sprout kids. But causes are related only to existent

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13. Ibid., p. 9, Ibid., p. 428.

things. 4) The potential effects only that for which it is potential, and what is potential must somehow exist. 5) And lastly, the effect is a state (bhāva) of the cause.

The philosophical motive behind this curious theory that Īśvarakṛṣṇa defends so ingeniously is puzzlement over the meaning of 'actual' and 'potential', and confusion over the term sat (real, being). Given the axiom that what really is always is and the non-existent can never come into existence, the philosopher must find some explanation for change other than the common sense view that things come to be and cease to be. One such explanation is that the universals, the forms, are that which is eternal and hence real, while the particulars that exhibit the forms are transient and hence unreal. This, in general, is the Platonist position. But Īśvarakṛṣṇa did not recognize universals or ideal forms as entities, so the advantages and embarrassments of a Platonist solution were closed to him. The Vaiśeṣikas and the Buddhists likewise did not recognize the separate being of universals, but the former solved the problem in an Aristotelian sort of way by allowing that universals reside in particulars, and the latter admitted the contingent existence (prajñapti-sat) of universals, in a somewhat more subjective way than did Vaiśeṣika.

The chronic difficulty of monistic systems is accounting for the diversity of the world. Sāṅkhya, still basically a monistic cosmology in spite of the duality between the souls and the world-substance (prakṛti), advances a clever and powerful solution. The one basic substance, prakṛti, is a mixture of three constituents, the guṇas. During the cosmic interlude the guṇas are in equilibrium. When this is upset, creation starts, and continues by virtue of oscillating disequilibrium until the end of the epoch, when everything returns again to equilibrium in the unmanifested. The three guṇas are in perpetual conspiracy, always two combining against the third, always one dominant and another moving to displace it. The pattern is quite like international relations as described in Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra<sup>14</sup> where kingdoms are perpetually forming alliances and disputing hegemonies. The situation in Sartre's No Exit is comparable, too; three people shut in a room forever, two always combining against the third, no enduring equilibrium possible.<sup>15</sup>

Early Greek philosophers often thought of change and motion as a disequilibrium among the physical elements. As Heraclitus says, 'All things happen by strife and necessity'.<sup>16</sup> The opposites strive, now one in the ascendent, then the other. In Empedocles, the two phases are termed 'the rule of love' and 'the rule of strife'. The former is a state in which the four elements are so uniformly mixed that nothing

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14. R. Shamasastri (trans.), Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra, Mysore: Sri Raghuvēer Printing Press, 1951, especially pp. 293 ff.

15. Jean-Paul Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays, New York: Random House (Vintage Books, V16), n.d.

16. G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven, op. cit., p. 195.



whatever can be distinguished in it.<sup>17</sup> The cyclical cosmology of Empedocles resembles the standard-average Indian one in many ways. But the guṇa theory differs from the Greek analogs in several crucial respects. The strife takes place not between two opposites but between the members of the 'eternal triangle', at any given time a pair and the 'odd guṇa out'. The mixture consists not of the four mahābhūtas (corresponding to the Greek four elements) but of three principles prior to the mahābhūtas, that occur low down in the tattva (principles) chart. The guṇas are not distinct substances, not physical elements, but in some way as mysterious and inscrutable as the relation between the persons of the Christian Trinity. They are three constituents in one substance that itself is indivisible and without parts.

The three guṇas are the substance of all manifested things, each guṇa being in greater proportion in some things, in others less. So substance, energy and change are united. All manifested things are perpetually in change. Īśvarakṛṣṇa aptly uses the simile of a dancer for prakṛti's (the world substance's) cosmic show.<sup>18</sup>

The guṇa theory possesses as much imaginative force and as much explanatory power as any piece of ancient speculative science. As the guṇas pervade all physical and mental phenomena, they serve to explain personality types, psychological moods, the course of a disease, the changing esthetic impact of a drama or dance, types of food, varieties of religious cult, and so on. They explain the action of gravity-- (sattva is light and tamas is heavy), the cycle of day and night (sattva illuminates, tamas darkens), and motion (rajas instigates, tamas halts). This theory satisfies superbly the rule that explanations shall posit the fewest possible entities. It is a very high-order generalization, a remarkable feat of scientific imagination. Its defects are several and serious. The guṇas are not observable and their arithmetic proportions cannot be determined, so an explanation in terms of guṇas is qualitative rather than quantitative, descriptive but not operational. This theory may tell what happens very well, but it does not really explain why it happens, any more than the soporific principle explains why the sleeping potion works. This, of course, is the defect of all ancient qualitative physics. Another objection is that such explanations are disguised tautologies. Many theological explanations are so, too: 'Who made the world?' 'God made it.' 'Who is God?' 'He is the person who made the world.'

### C. Mādhyaṃika

Nāgārjuna (c. 150-250 A.D.) was the founder of one of the most original, startling

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17. Ibid., p. 327.

18. Sāṃkhya-kārikā 59; S.Radhakrishnar and C.A. Moore, op. cit., p. 444.

and enigmatic of all philosophies.<sup>19</sup> It is called Mādhyamika or Madhyamaka (belonging to the Middle), because it claims to expound the Middle Path between being and non-being which the Buddha declared in his sermon to Kaccāna.<sup>20</sup> The Mādhyamika system is conservative to the point of archaism in that it rejects Abidharma and returns to the basic concepts of a few cardinal early sūtras. It is radical and innovative in that it employs systematically a rigorous dialectic of refutation and attempts to demolish the false views of all actual and possible opponents. The idea of rejecting all speculative views (dṛṣṭi) is an early Buddhist one. The prasāṅga (reductio ad absurdum) technique for doing so one is one that Nāgārjuna borrowed from the Nyāya repertory of debating stratagems and applied with uncommon virtuosity.

His main concepts and definitions come from the Mahāyāna Sūtras that preach emptiness (śūnyatā). These texts were written at various times between 100 B.C. and 400 A.D. They engage in rhetorical exposition and dialogue games, but not in formal argumentation. Nāgārjuna accepted these Mahāyāna Sūtras as well as the early Buddhist Sūtras as scriptural authority (āgama). He was no nihilist and no skeptic. In his homiletic writings he preaches the way to nirvāṇa in straightforward, positive language.<sup>21</sup> In his polemical treatises he entertains the objection that if everything is empty then the Buddhist teaching is empty and so vain. His reply is that the Buddhist teaching would be vain if everything were not empty, but that it is true and valid precisely because all things are empty.<sup>22</sup>

Emptiness means absence of own-being (svabhāva). An own-being is a sort of essence. It is distinctive, immutable, possesses an inalienable defining attribute (lakṣaṇa), and neither comes to be nor ceases to be. It is unmade and not dependent on another.<sup>23</sup> Its otherwise-being never occurs,<sup>24</sup> that is, it does not change.

Own-being (svabhāva) is a cover-term for the ultimate substances posited by the

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19. Readings on Nāgārjuna: Richard H. Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-70; Frederick J. Streng, *Emptiness*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967, pp. 181-220; 221-227. (translation of *Madhyamaka-kārikās* and *Vigraha-vyāvartanī*.); T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1955.

20. S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

21. *Suhṛllekha* ('Friendly Epistle'), transl. by H. Wenzel, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1886, pp. 1-32; Ratnāvalī, transl. by G. Tucci, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1934, pp. 307-325; 1936, pp. 237-252, 423-435, manuscript translations of remaining portions, Kio Kanda, University of Wisconsin, 1966.

22. *Vigraha-vyāvartanī*. Frederick J. Streng, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-227.

23. *Madhyamaka-kārikā* 15.2. Richard H. Robinson, "Some Logical Aspects of Nāgārjuna's System," *Philosophy East and West*, 1957, p. 299.

24. *Madhyamaka-kārikā* 15.8.

various schools--Brāhman-Ātman in the Upaniṣads, prakṛti (world-substance) and puruṣa (soul) in Sāṅkhya, the nine substances (dravya) in Vaiśeṣika, and the dharmas (elemental force-factors) in Abhidharma. The term svabhāva seems originally to have been introduced by the Materialists. For them it meant the inherent powers of the four elements. The Abhidharmists use the word to mean the own-mark, the inalienable class-property, of each dharma, and also the substratum of the own-mark, the thing-marked, that persists through the transition from future to present to past. "Own-being always exists, a being is not termed permanent, and the being is not other than the own-being."<sup>25</sup> The Sarvāstivādins maintained that past and future dharmas exist, which the Sautrāntikas denied. The difference is to some extent merely verbal, a question of whether 'exist' is to be used in one tense or in three.<sup>26</sup> But underlying the dispute is the perennial puzzle over the actual vs. the potential, whether conceived entities exist while they are not being perceived, whether any constants occur in the flux of becoming.

The Materialists allowed own-being only to entities that can be observed, as they did not admit inference as a pramāṇa (verifier). The surviving fragments of their literature do not make clear whether they accepted memory as a valid source for knowledge of past things. The early Buddhists and through them the Mādhyamikas inherited the Materialist distrust of inference, though they allowed its legitimacy for certain purposes. They also came to consider memory as a potent source of error in the formation of concepts. Class-characteristics are identified by correlating a perception with a memory. If the past is unreal, then a concept is at best the coupling of a real thing and an unreal thing. Ideas are imaginative constructs (vikalpa). Sense-perception, though, is free from such constructs, and is particular. Words are labels for constructs, so verbal expressions share all the defects of conceptual thought. Reality for Buddhists of all kinds is primarily what is observed, immediately experienced. Inferred entities correspond to experience sufficiently to be reliable for everyday purposes, but not for metaphysical purposes.

Emptiness is by definition equivalent to dependent arising (pratītya-samutpāda).<sup>27</sup> That is, emptiness is co-extensive with regular, patterned change in which all phenomena are without own-being, impermanent and fraught with suffering (strife). These statements, though, are not intended as the last stage in a rational apprehension but rather as the point of departure for existential realization, not as the moon but as a finger pointing at the moon. Emptiness is not a substance or an entity, but a designation (prajñapti). There is in language and experience no Archimedean point on which to rest a conceptual edifice that fits the case absolutely. The worst

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25. Abhidharmakośa, v. 58.

26. Ibid.

27. Mādhyamaka-kārikā 24.18.

of all false views is to think that emptiness is a real thing. The opponent objects: But if emptiness is not real, then your whole system is baseless. Nāgārjuna replies: If emptiness were real, then things would not be empty, and my system would be without foundation. But emptiness is empty, too. Of course my system is without a foundation of the kind you expect. But 'all things are empty' is true in the same conventional sense as ordinary true statements, so we have no need to make an absolute out of it.

The Śūnyavādin Sūtras had already said that all the dharmas (elemental force-factors) are apratiṣṭhita (foundationless). Emptiness is not an ontological ground, not a cosmological first principle. Nonetheless it functions as the limiter in the Mādhyamika system, just as do Brahman in the Upaniṣads and prakṛti (world-substance) in Sāṅkhya. It is the own-being of beings. The own-being of all things is that they have no own-being. This statement is a seeming paradox. Does it mean simply that things have no own-being? There is clearly more to it, because it is also said that the own-being of the Buddha is the same as the own-being of the world, that the Buddha has no own-being and the world has no own-being.<sup>28</sup> There are not two separate realms of being, one real and permanent and the other unreal and transitory. There are, though, two kinds of truth, the expressional worldly truth and the absolute truth. The Buddha teaches through the expressional truth, and relying on this teaching the bodhisattvas progress to direct realization of the inexpressible absolute truth.

The Śūnyavādin Sūtras say that the highest truth is inexpressible, but they do not restrict this inexpressibility to any class of theological entities such as the soul, the person, God or the Buddha. Everything is inexpressible. Here we meet again the idea of ineffability that the Kāṭha, Muṇḍaka and such Upaniṣads maintain, but generalized and conjoined with a highly developed dialectic. These Upaniṣads had pronounced tarka (the use of speculative reason) incapable of reaching certain supreme truths. Nāgārjuna agrees that the highest truth is not to be attained through tarka, and yet he is probably the most brilliant tarkika in the history of Indian thought. Was he in fact using reason to demolish reason?

Nāgārjuna was not denying the efficacy of reason for mundane purposes. He was saying that truth is not to be attained by manipulating utterances but by going beyond the utterances to the experiences towards which they point. The meaning is not to be found in the utterance, but in its object of reference. Prajñapti (designation) means a signal, directions or instructions. It is contingent significance as contrasted with inherent meaning. Since words do not possess intrinsic meanings, the rationalist project of arriving at metaphysical truth by extracting the true meanings of terms is foredoomed.

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28. Ibid., 22. 16; Richard H. Robinson, Early Mādhyamika In India and China, p. 40



Like other Indian limiter concepts, emptiness is reflexive; it applies to itself as well as to others. It is self-validating, and so provides an epistemological foundation even though it does not constitute a cosmological first principle. Īśvarakṛṣṇa insists that the limiter must be outside of the set of limited things. He denies that things can limit, cause, or otherwise define each other unless there is such an entity outside the manifested world. Nāgārjuna does not admit this to be necessary; the factual statement suffices (and, moreover, is verifiable) that all common sense things arise through specific causes and conditions. "He who sees dependent arising sees suffering, arising, cessation and path."<sup>29</sup> The immediate experience of the man who no longer mistakes imaginative constructs (vikalpas) for realities, who no longer superimposes own-beings (svabhāvas) on his experience, confirms the cardinal Buddhist doctrines about the 'suchness' of things. This is not some ineffable knowledge apart from the verbal teaching, but is the ineffable goal to which the utterances are the road.

The saints realize the 'suchness' (tathatā) of things, but it is not to be confused with an own-being (svabhāva). A Western analogy may elucidate this point. Aquinas holds that God is the only being whose existence is identical with His essence. The image is that of the scale of being, on which the higher one goes, the narrower becomes the gap between existence and essence, until finally the two merge in the Godhead. Nāgārjuna views the course to Buddhahood as a progressive elimination of wrong views, narrowing the gap between thought and experience until at last the two coalesce in non-conceptual knowledge. On this road, inference, especially the destructive dialectic, plays a crucial part. Just as an utterance is a signpost pointing not to itself but to a referent, rational inference achieves its goal when it transcends itself rather than when it comes to rest in itself. In the early Buddhist similitude, it is a raft to be abandoned when the stream has been crossed.

The own-being (svabhāva) is a self-contradictory notion, so Nāgārjuna has little trouble demolishing any proposition whose terms are held to have svabhāvas. If it is real, it must exist. But if it exists; it must be subject to change. The object of the refutation of svabhāvas is therapeutic in that they occasion emotional clinging to reified concepts, and this kind of obsession is a moral and spiritual impediment. Wrong views, though, are embodied in the philosophies of the different schools. Nāgārjuna's aim is to catalogue all possible wrong views in a finite but comprehensive schema, and to refute them all so that the general treatment covers all the actual systems of philosophy.

The following abstract pattern expresses Nāgārjuna's standard strategy of refutation: You say that C relates A and B. A and B must either be completely identical or completely different. If they are completely identical, C cannot obtain, because

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29. Ibid., 24. 40; Ibid., p. 46.

two things that are completely different can have no common ground and so cannot be related. Therefore it is false that C obtains between A and B.

The insistence that A and B must be completely identical or different rather than partly identical follows from the definition of *svabhāva* (own-being) as not dependent on another. Qualifications such as 'some' and 'partly' are excluded because the discussion is concerned not with common sense assertions such as 'some fuel is burning and some is not', but with concepts of own-being and essence. What pertains to part of an essence must pertain to the whole essence. A defining property is either essential or non-essential. If it is non-essential it is not really a defining property of an essence. If it is essential, then the essence can never be devoid of the property.

The validity and relevance of Nāgārjuna's refutations hinge upon whether his opponents really upheld the existence of own-beings (*svabhāvas*) as he defines the term. He claims that he is not affirming propositions of his own but is just using his opponents' statements to reduce his opponents' theories to absurdity. The maneuver is admitted to be legitimate by modern philosophers, though the ancient Nyāya school contested vehemently that such a pure refutation was inadmissible. In fact, Nāgārjuna frames his opponents. His case rests on several assumptions that are not shared by those whom he is attacking.

1) He holds that whatever has extension is divisible, so is composite, impermanent and unreal. An indivisible, infinitesimal thing could have no extension. But several schools--Vaiśeṣika, Sarvāstivāda and the Sūnyavādin Sūtras, not to mention the Upaniṣads--consider *ākāśa* (ether, space) to be omnipresent and indivisible. Thus there is at least one entity that is not composite, has extension and is permanent. This being so, it is not absurd to hold that there are others. And if extension is admitted, then duration must be admitted, too, because the arguments against duration are like those against extension.

2) He holds that to exist means to be arisen, so that existence is synonymous with manifestation and there is no unmanifested existence. Sāṅkhya, though, affirmed that arising is the same as manifestation, and that things 'exist' in another state before they arise and after they cease. The difference is largely though not wholly definitional. Nāgārjuna does not point out this difference of definition, and he does not refute the Sāṅkhya axiom. He just denies it.

3) A real thing would have to be an utterly simple entity that contains no diversity. If it had diversity, it would have extension and so would not be indivisible and real. This axiom is not accepted by the *pariṇāmadādins*--Iśvarakṛṣṇa and Rāmānuja, for example. The Sāṅkhya world nature (*prakṛti*), as we have seen, consists of the three properties (*guṇas*) and hence has diversity as its intrinsic nature. Again, Nāgārjuna does not refute this theory. He asserts an axiom of his own against the contradictory one of his adversaries.

More examples can be given, but this is enough to show that Nāgārjuna did not achieve the ambitious task that he set himself. One reason is that own-being (svabhāva) as he uses it is too general a concept. He lumps together too many quite disparate things, and to make them fit he has to exclude some essential features c. each school's doctrine. If he had succeeded in refuting all philosophical views, it would have been a momentous development in the history of philosophy. The classical schools did not consider that he had refuted them, and although he is said to have attracted many disciples, his school did not endanger the existence of its rivals. His polemic campaigns were not very successful in achieving their main objective. But he did compel Indian philosophers to state their case more discriminatingly and argue with more cogency. And several of the ideas that he invented or articulated passed into the general current of subsequent philosophy and radically altered its course.

Nāgārjuna quotes the stock similes of the Śūnyavādin Sūtras: Arising, abiding and ceasing (the three marks of conditioned things) are like an illusion (māyā), like a dream, like a city of the Gandharvas (celestial musicians). Likewise are defilements, deeds, agents and consequences.<sup>30</sup> Agent, act and deed are like a phantom who, created by the magician, in turn creates another phantom.<sup>31</sup> The term māyā (illusion) occurs in late Vedic hymns, and in the Gītā it denotes the yogic, magic-like creative action of God. But māyāvāda in the full sense comes into Indian thought with the Śūnyavādin Sūtras, passes over to Mādhyamika and Viṣṇūnavāda, and achieves its final glory in Advaita Vedānta. Māyā indicates the no-man's-land of ontology, the condition of things that exist in some senses and in other senses do not exist, that exist contingently but not absolutely, that are something but are not what they seem to be.

What is it that produces illusion (māyā)? God, or one's own mind, or the ripening of karma? If the phenomenal world is māyā, the question is tantamount to asking what is the universal cause. Vedāntins of all sub-schools answer that God causes the world. Advaita Vedāntins distinguish two modes of causation, one the appearance (vivarta) of the highest māyā, the personal Creator, on the ground of the absolute Brahman-without-qualities, and the other the projection (śṛṣṭi) of the phenomenal world by the Creator. The Buddhists, of course, answer that dependent arising is the cause of everything, that each phantom makes its successors. The Vedāntin then asks, 'Who is the magician who made the first phantom? Is he not God?' The Buddhist reply is that the simile breaks down at this point, that cosmically there is no first phantom and no magician.

Nāgārjuna states that transmigration (saṃsāra) and nirvāṇa are non-different,

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30. Ibid., 7.34, 17.33.

31. Ibid., 17.31-32.

and that the Buddha and the world are non-different. Śūnyavāda and Mādhyamika are non-dualist, like certain passages in the Upaniṣads and like Śaṅkara's school of Vedānta. The Buddha and nirvāṇa are māyā, emptiness, bereft of own-being, just as much as worldly entities. One aspect of this non-duality is that dependent arising, the causal process, has the attributes of nirvāṇa. It has no arising, no ceasing, nothing eternal, nothing annihilated, no plurality of entities, no singularity of entity, no coming and going. It is quiescent of discursus (either talk or phenomenal panorama), and it is peaceful (Śiva).<sup>32</sup> These attributes are the same as those of the Upaniṣadic Brahman, except that it is one and eternal, a difference that is largely verbal inasmuch as everlasting manifested duration and numerical oneness are not intended in either case. Impermanence and permanence, change and non-change, are all thought-constructs (vikalpas), so the reality and the knowledge that transcends concepts lie beyond the duality between change and permanence, appearance and reality.

Māyā means not only contingency and duality but also illusion and error. What is false from one standpoint, though, is true from a lower standpoint. Dream experiences are true within the dream context and false from the waking standpoint. The ordinary waking state is to enlightenment as a dream is to waking. Consequently, ordinary waking experience cannot be adduced to prove that things are as they seem. Nāgārjuna says, "If you think that becoming and ceasing are seen, they are seen only through delusion."<sup>33</sup> This is the germ of a theory of error which his whole system presupposes but which he never expounds. Much of it can be easily inferred from the theory of cognition that he does state. The six sense-objects (rūpa, etc.) are all like a city of the gandharvas (heavenly musicians), a mirage or a dream.<sup>34</sup> They are the objects of the passions, but they are thought-constructs (vikalpa).<sup>35</sup> Whatever things may be in themselves, things as we know them coincide with the forms of conception in which we know them. Therefore it is circular to insist that this is how things must be because this is how we perceive them. The māyāvādin (illusionist) counters that this is not so, because the enlightened ones perceive things otherwise. The ordinary worldling confined to the realm of concepts and dualities cannot call to witness his experience on questions where his experience is disqualified.

Nāgārjuna succinctly states the means to enlightenment. Reality (dharma-nature) is, like nirvāṇa, unarisen and unceased, so when the cognitive field of thought is laid to rest, nameables are laid to rest, that is, conceptualization is

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32. Ibid., vandana (introductory invocation), Richard H. Robinson, Early Mādhyamika in India and China, p. 40.

33. Ibid., 21.12

34. Ibid., 23.8

35. Ibid., 23.7



halted, the mental monologue stops, and one knows without superimposing a verbal commentary. In emptiness the panorama is stopped.<sup>36</sup> The standard Buddhist means to this goal is meditation, which consists of tranquilization and discernment. Tranquilization is the cultivation of one-pointedness, trance, samādhi. Discernment is the exercise of insight, intellectual penetration into the subject of meditation. Nāgārjuna's dialectic system is, like other mokṣa-subservient philosophy, an instrument for developing discernment. It is of some effect even if practiced without samādhi, though full development of discernment requires tranquilization.

Certain valuations are inherent in Śūnyavāda on the one hand, and classical Sāṅkhya on the other. According to Sāṅkhya, the delusion at the root of transmigration and suffering is that the soul has any real affinity with the world. So salvation is the most utter isolation, eternal solipsism. Relations are bad, and the ideal is to cut them off. In Śūnyavāda, there are no unrelated things; there is no entity that can cut out of the community of beings; and the state of salvation is just the world of transmigration seen from the other side of the looking-glass. The bodhisattva cultivates compassion as well as dispassion, helpfulness as well as wisdom. This world of māyā (illusion) is a theater in which the bodhisattvas play the drama of their own and others' salvation, knowing all the while that it is a drama.

We have only glimpses of the social correlates of these opposite world-views. Śūnyavāda appealed to many cosmopolitan merchants and princes, men whose social relations were similar to the Buddhist pattern of cause and conditions, who were aware of their own social creativity and could see in it an analogue to illusion (māyā). They were men at once involved and detached. The texts give considerable evidence that Śūnyavāda appealed to householders as well as monks, to people from all parts of India and abroad, to women as well as to men. We know much less about classical Sāṅkhya's social base. It may have appealed to a different segment of cultivated townsmen, to those who were oppressed by the obligations of the joint family and kinship system and driven by lack of privacy to yearn pathologically for absolute and everlasting solitude.

#### D. Vijñānavāda

Mind (citta or manas) played a central role in early Buddhism. The Dhammapada says, "All dharmas are forerun by manas, chieftained by manas, consist of manas." (1.1) Also, "Those who restrain citta, which is far-ranging, walks alone, is bodiless and sits in the cave of the heart, will be freed from the bonds of death." (3.5)<sup>37</sup> This in a nutshell is the essence of yoga. Yoga Sūtra (1.2) says, "Yoga is stopping

36. Ibid., 18.5, 7

37. S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., pp. 292, 295.

the transformations of citta."<sup>38</sup> We have just seen that the Śūnyavādins brought to the forefront the idea that cognitive operations construct and at the same time falsify the picture that the ordinary worldling takes to be reality. Neither the Śūnyavādin Sūtras nor the Mādhyamika philosophers detailed the phenomenology of the mind-constructed world, but they set the stage for the Vijñānavādin movement that rose to prominence about 300 A.D.

Just as the Mādhyamika treatises were preceded by the Śūnyavādin Sūtras--the Prajñā-pāramitās, the Samādhi-rāja, the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa, etc.--so Vijñānavāda appeared first in Sūtras such as the Daśabhumikā, the Saṃdhinirmocana and the Lankāvatāra. The first nameable philosopher of this school was Maitreyanātha, who lived during the fourth century A.D. He was the master of the two brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, who commented on his treatises and brought the school to its full development.

No two things could differ more in appearance than a Mādhyamika and a Yogācāra (Vijñānavādin) treatise. The former is dialectical, the latter didactic. The Mādhyamika criticizes Abhidharma, the Yogācāra writes a veritable Mahāyāna Abhidharma, with headings, sub-headings, lists and numbers ramifying luxuriantly. Mādhyamika dialectic works contain many negations and few affirmations. Yogācāra works are the other way around. Their major project is construction of a world-description, the same project as in Abhidharma, Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika.

Yogācāra is a creative synthesis of three major formants--the māyāvāda of the early Mahāyāna Sūtras, the Abhidharma world-plan, and a monistic emanation causality of the Upaniṣadic and Sāṅkhya type, probably borrowed from some kind of Sāṅkhya. Vaiśeṣika influence is also apparent in the treatment of relations. In addition, there are numerous doctrines invented by Yogācāra. The result is a prodigy of design and elaboration. No other intellectual artifact of the great Gupta age so eminently displays the classical Indian genius for organization combined with seriousness of substance. The Chinese, whose native civilization was a one-storey edifice, were as amazed at the form of these Indian treatises as at the multi-storeyed pagodas and multi-tiered paintings and reliefs with which Buddhism covered their land in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.

We have already remarked that Hīnayāna psychology reduced thinking to the perception of ideas and decentralized the personality by partitioning cognition among the six sense-consciousnesses. The alternative distribution of mental functions among the four psychological skandhas (factors) was equally divisive. The Abhidharma array of fifty or so mind-associated dharmas (see Fig. 7) and the elaborate description of psychological processes as configurations of these dharmas

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38. yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ.

increased the explanatory power of Buddhist psychology but created acute metaphysical problems. The six sense-consciousnesses were restricted to the function of witnessing present objects. But experience abounds in psychological phenomena that have evidently been present in the mind without being witnessed. Where does a memory reside between when it is first experienced and when it is recalled? Where do deeds reside between when they are committed and when their consequences ripen? Where do ideas, attitudes and persisting emotional states go while one is asleep, in deep trance or dead and awaiting rebirth? If they are simply suspended, then when one awakes or comes out of trance why does one not become a different person? Why appropriate the same psychology that one had before?

The problem is another variant of the actual and the potential. Substance- and-emanation philosophies solve it by treating the potential as an actual but latent state within an underlying, persisting substance. Yogācāra contrived to reap all the advantages of this solution without sacrificing the Buddhist tenets that all phenomena are momentary force-events, that there is no persisting substance, and that all phenomena are māyā and empty.

The Viññānavādins add two more consciousnesses (viññānas) to the common six. (See Fig. 12) The ālaya-viññāna (store or foundation consciousness) consists of 'seeds' (bīja) or 'impressions' (vāsanā) deposited by former events. It is a series of these seeds, each momentary and causing a like seed in the successive moment until the seed-series ripens and is projected into manifestation. The ālaya-viññāna (store or foundation consciousness) is unconscious and is not an object of perception for the six sense-consciousnesses. It is the cause of all defiled dharmas (force-factors). Pure dharmas, on the other hand, are caused by the outflowing of the Dharma from the pure Dharma-realm (dharmadhātu), which, after its rather mysterious intrusion into the phenomenal, deposits pure seeds that lie in the store or foundation consciousness (ālaya-viññāna) but are not of it. As the individual bodhisattva progresses towards enlightenment, the ālaya-viññāna (store or foundation consciousness) withers away while the pure dharmas more and more displace its seeds of defilement. Finally there occurs a 'revolution' of the personality-base (āśraya-parāvṛtti).

Through fully knowing that external things are shown by one's one citta, there occurs the revolution of the personality-base of vikalpa, which is mokṣa and not destruction.<sup>39</sup>

Yogācāra asserts that there are three own-beings (svabhāva)—the absolute, the relative and the imaginary. The relative is a mixture of the absolute and the imaginary.

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39. D. T. Suzuki, Studies in the Lankāvatāra Sūtra, London: Routledge, 1930, p. 184 ff., 390.

Enlightenment consists of purging the imaginary out of the relative and so refining it into the absolute. (Pariniṣpanna, usually translated 'absolute', might better be rendered 'perfect'). The 'revolution' is twofold, rejection of defilements and non-rejection of transmigration. Saṃsāra (transmigration) is the defiled part of the relative own-being, and nirvāṇa is its pure part. One expels the defiled part and transforms (pariṇāma) into the pure part. The bodhisattva thus gains sovereignty over all the dharmas of transmigration (saṃsāra), becoming a cosmic yogin like Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā.<sup>40</sup> He manifests himself in all realms of transmigration, assuming the bodies of all kinds of living beings, using skilful means to teach them and confer blessings on them. Liberation for the bodhisattva means positive power to act, and not just disjunction from suffering.<sup>41</sup>

The mind (manas) is the Yogācārin counterpart of Sāṅkhya ahaṃkāra (I-sayer), just as the store or foundation consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) corresponds to the intellect-will (buddhi). It is the 'defiled mind' (kliṣṭa-manas), the basis from which the other six consciousnesses arise, the seat of ego-consciousness, of the conceit 'I am', of self-love and of ignorance. It persists continually, though of course as a stream of dharmas rather than as a substance. This accounts for the persistence of individuality in states such as sleep, trance and death in which there is no conscious self-recognition. If there were no mind (manas), there could be no metaphysical ignorance, since this unknowing of the true nature of things cannot reside in any one of the six sense-consciousnesses or in any combination of them. But this ignorance is a fact of religious experience, so the mind must exist. Further, there must be something to account for the difference between merely insentient trances, that are defiled, and the trance of cessation, that is pure. A man who has experienced the latter is purified by it, and one who has experienced the former remains as defiled as before, since belief in an ego-self (Ātman) has persisted.

The store or foundation-consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is inactive (nivṛtta), while the other seven consciousnesses (vijñānas) are active (pravṛtta). The store or foundation (ālaya) and the mind (manas) are unconscious, while the other six are conscious. The similarity to Freudian and Jungian psychology is remarkable, though there is no exact term-to-term correspondence. The mind (manas) is rather like the ego, and the pure impressions conditioning the store or foundation-consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) are somewhat like the superego. The role of defilement as an activating force is perhaps similar to libido. But the most notable fact is that this classical Buddhist theory is actually a depth psychology, that it conceives personality as a system in which forces operate, influences flow, conditioning takes place, and therapy consists of the progressive internalization and strengthening of

40. Bhagavad Gītā 7.25, 26; 9.5; 10.7, 17, 18, 19; 11.4, 8, 9, 47.

41. Asaṅga, Mahāyāna-saṃgraha, transl. by Étienne Lamotte, Louvain: Muséon, 2 vols., 1938-1939, pp. 259-264.



forces stimulated by an efflux from pure being (tathatā, dharmadhātu).

The phenomenal world is a projection from the store or foundation consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). This idea is endemic in Indian thought from the Ṛg Veda onwards. We have seen how thinking was the creative act in early brāhmaṇical cosmology. Sāṅkhya in all its forms preserves this feature. Buddhi, vijñāna and citta are synonyms for 'consciousness' or 'intellect', and it is not fortuitous that the Lankāvatāra often uses buddhi (intellect-will), though the word is rare in earlier Buddhist texts. Vijñāna as the transmigrating principle occurs in the Pali Suttas, but its cosmological role is obscured by the scholastic interpretation of the twelvefold chain of dependent arising as only the genesis of the pluralistic individual.

The store or foundation consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is both individual and collective. It receives the impressions of individual deeds, stores them, and projects a) the common 'receptacle world' and b) the psycho-physical individual. The relative reality of the world and persons is maintained. Everything, though, is dependent on mind. The purified mind of the saint no longer projects the relative world, but it sees the relative world projected by the minds of the unenlightened. The individual is the unit of karmic accounting, but all sorts of inter-individual transactions take place, good and evil dharmas are exchanged between individual dharma-streams (persons), and the purified stream eventually is liberated from the constrictions of individuality.

The relative (interdependent) plane consists of acts of consciousness (vijñaptis) that are co-grasped by imagination of the unreal (abhūta-parikalpa). The acts of consciousness (vijñaptis) are: a) the 'representations' of body, body-dweller and experiencer, that is, the six sense organs (indriyas), b) the six sense fields (viṣayas) experienced, c) the experiencer, i.e., the six consciousnesses, d) the categories of time, number, place, discourse, distinction of self and other, and dying and birth in good or evil destinies.<sup>42</sup> The acts of consciousness (vijñaptis) listed under (d) are just aspects of the first three sets. They are constructions postulated to account for features of relative experience. In the absolute they do not obtain. In this way, Yogācāra appropriates the Vaiśeṣika relation-categories, reduces them to relative status, gets the explanatory advantages and avoids most of the metaphysical embarrassments.

The thesis that all dharmas are citta-mātra (mind-only) is self-evident for two classes of dharmas (elemental force-factors), citta (mind) and caitta (mental) (see Figs. 7, 12), natural to a non-realist explanation of the citta-viprayuktas (mind-dissociated), and appropriate to the asaṃskṛtas (unconditioned) in a philosophy that allows a transcendental dimension to mind. The chief stumbling block to the

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42. Ibid., pp. 87-92.

unpersuaded is the assertion that the five viṣayas (sense fields) and indriyas (sense organs)--the rūpa-dharma column in the dharma-lists--are likewise mind-only. The Viññānavādin position is that:

It would be false to say that the sense-organ and the object-support are not rūpa, but this rūpa is only a transformation (pariṇāma) of viññāna. When the eight viññānas arise, through the force of the seeds of the senses and the objects, the ālaya-viññāna transforms into eye, etc. and color, etc. Through these transformations the five sense-consciousnesses are provided with senses and objects.<sup>43</sup>

Asaṅga quotes several passages from Mahāyāna Sūtras in support of his proposition that all things are mind-only. Then he propounds several inferential proofs. Different classes of beings perceive the same entity in diverse ways. (Percepta are relative to the perceiver.) Some representations are perceived when no object-support is present, for example when the past is remembered, when the future is anticipated, and when one dreams (since some percepta have no object but are mere mental appearances, the fact that perception occurs does not ipso facto prove that there is an object there). If the object existed, cognition would take place effortlessly and unerringly. But since effort and error attend cognition, the object is not 'out there'. (This argument is obscure and dubious. It seems to say that error would not occur if the object determined the cognition.) The object-dimension, furthermore, is altered by the consciousness of the perceiver. The great yogins transform the material elements into anything they wish merely by the force of their mind-power. The contemplative adept sees as a complex, integrated present the dharmas and their characteristics that are not so integrated in ordinary cognition. And the adept who has achieved simple, non-conceptual knowledge (nirvikalpaka jñāna) sees no objects whatever. For these reasons, says Asaṅga, the acts of consciousness (viññaptis) do not have real objects.<sup>44</sup>

What is the absolute own-being that co-exists in the mixture of relative own-being? It is the goal of the process of purification, and the influence, descending from the absolute into transmigration (saṃsāra), that conduces to the goal. It is the pure nature affirmed in all the Mahāyāna Sūtras--suchness (tathatā), emptiness (śūnyatā), reality-peak (bhūtakōṭi), the signless (animitta), the supreme entity (paramārtha), and the dharma-realm (dharmadhātu). Its phenomenal exponent is the Mahāyāna teaching, which is not imagined, because it is the cause of purification (to be efficacious is to be real). It is not relative, because it is an emanation

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43. Hsuan-tsang, Viññapti-mātratā-siddhi, transl. by L. de la Vallée Poussin, Paris: Geuthner, 1928, vol. I, p. 41.

44. Mahāyāna-saṃgraha, pp. 104-106.

or outflow from the pure dharma-realm (its mode is relative, but its source is absolute).<sup>45</sup>

The strength and the weakness of this metaphysics lie in the connection it makes between the relative and the absolute. The relative is a coupling of the real and the unreal. The unreal, it is true, is described as a function of the real, as based on the real. But the axiomatic proposition that a relation between a real and an unreal thing cannot be a real relation is brushed aside rather than faced by the Yogācārins. Their straightforward conception of non-duality is that "The relative own-being, in its absolute part, is permanent; in its imaginary part it is impermanent; in its two parts together, it is neither permanent nor impermanent."<sup>46</sup> Nāgārjuna had more than a century earlier declared that neither the real nor the unreal can have parts.<sup>47</sup> Asaṅga and Vasubandhu do not deal with the objection.

Vijñānavāda resolves quite well a number of problems that had vexed Indian thought for a millenium, and synthesizes the best of each classical system of philosophy (darśana)--the Sāṅkhya treatment of latency and manifestation, the monism of the Upaniṣads and Sāṅkhya, Buddhist process-and-category treatment of change, Vaiśeṣika theory of qualities and categories, Śūnyavādin and Upaniṣadic transcendental ontology. It died eventually, like medieval European scholasticism, from cancer of the categories. The architectonic impulse ran unchecked, lists of items multiplied, and pretty soon the system was so complex that no one had time and energy enough both to master it and to use it. This is a pity, because it is a useful religious and psychiatric philosophy and might have lent itself better to scientific development than either Hindu realist-pluralism or the much less precise and operational Advaita Vedānta that dominated the late classical and medieval periods.

The Chinese, Japanese and Tibetans adopted Vijñānavāda, simplified it, and adapted it to their own religious ends. One of the most influential expositions of this system is 'The Awakening of Faith', written by a Chinese scholar in the sixth century A.D. and falsely attributed to the Indian poet Aśvaghoṣa. 'The Awakening of Faith' begins by saying that it is composed expressly for "persons who are vexed by prolix treatises, whose minds like to comprehend many ideas through a short mnemonic text." The seventh-century pilgrim Hsüan Tsang was surprised to find that 'The Awakening of Faith' was unknown in India, so he translated it from Chinese into Sanskrit. But alas, the paṇḍits of Nālandā, engrossed in their obscure but prestigious commentaries, ignored the clear and simple little gift.<sup>48</sup> Philosophies don't die, they are killed by philosophers.

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45. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-125.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

47. *Mādhyamaka-kārikā*, chapter 27.

48. Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1952, p. 56.

### E. Advaita Vedānta

The Brahma Sūtras attributed to Bādarāyaṇa contain a few lines in refutation of Viṣṇānavāda. Consequently this work in its present form must date from the fifth century A.D. Much of its content might be centuries earlier, though, as it is concerned with Vedic exegesis and is not philosophically very advanced. Time and again the question is not how to solve a philosophical problem but how to interpret a passage from the Upaniṣads.

Section II decides that he to whom the brāhmaṇs and kṣatriyas are but food is the highest Self. Section III shows that the two entered into the cave are Brahman and the individual soul. Section IV shows that the person within the eye mentioned in Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4, 15, 1 is Brahman. Section V shows that the ruler within (antaryāmin) described in Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3, 7, 3 is Brahman.<sup>49</sup>

Crabbed, obscure, pedantic and often trivial, these aphorisms stand in sorry contrast to the beautiful prose and lucid rational philosophy that Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya-Yoga and the Buddhists were composing in the fifth century. And yet they exhibit one virtue that undoubtedly accounts for the surprising re-emergence and eventual triumph of the Upaniṣadic tradition: scrupulous care that no jot or tittle of the holy texts should be lost or misinterpreted. The Aupaniṣadas who composed the aphorisms were pundits, oblivious (at least professionally) to the greater part of human experience and preternaturally impervious against the intellectual influence of their contemporaries. But there was one kind of truth--the exegetical--about which they cared and in the service of which they forged a remarkable discipline.

Śaṅkara (788-820? A.D.) was still tied to the exegetical form. His three chief works are commentaries, on 1) the Brahma Sūtras, 2) the Upaniṣads, and 3) the Bhagavad Gītā. Most of the other schools had long since given up the commentary on a primary scripture as a vehicle for major philosophical disputation, so in this respect Śaṅkara was old-fashioned. His disciples threw off the constraining commentary format and wrote independent treatises as their contemporary rivals were doing. Śaṅkara is nonetheless a gifted writer, a master of Sanskrit expository prose, and (if any of the attributions of minor works are genuine), author of genuinely poetic didactic verse and of lovely hymns of praise. If the style is the man, then Śaṅkara is lucid, serious, consequential, graceful and versatile.

It is difficult to decide how original Śaṅkara is, because, except for Gauḍapāda, we know extremely little about the views of any previous Advaitin. Śaṅkara's system,

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49. Paraphrased from George Thibaut's summary, The Vedānta-Sūtras, also called Brahma Sūtras, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 34, p. xxxv.



though, is extremely original when compared with the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtras, or any non-Vedānta philosophy. He borrowed Buddhist ideas extensively, but it is doubtful that he had studied either Mādhyamika or Vijñānavāda at first hand. The influence seems to have come to him through his teachers and through the general intellectual climate of his times. He poses as a faithful interpreter of the Vedic tradition, and we have no reason to question the good faith of his claim--though it is patently untrue. What are we to do with a great man who denies his own creativity? Some modern Indian scholar or other will react adversely to either alternative, that Śaṅkara did not invent and borrow in order to transform the Upaniṣadic tradition, or that he did. In point of fact, he did invent and borrow.

Śaṅkara did not erect a constructive general philosophy like those of Aristotle, Hegel or Vasubandhu. He did not attempt to synthesize all knowledge in a summa, but confined his attention to the object of Vedānta-study, which he says is to get rid of ignorance, the cause of human misery, and to attain the knowledge of the oneness of the Ātman. He aims to show that this is the purpose of all the Upaniṣads.<sup>50</sup> He is thus a theologian with a narrow but highly important problematic. His philosophy is developed within the confines of this limited objective.

His point of departure is the existence of the Ātman. He adopts the old Vaiśeṣika thesis that the Ātman is known to exist because it is the referent of the pronoun 'I'. He proceeds to argue that 'I' refers properly to a pure subject, but that commonly people superimpose the attributes of self upon non-self and of non-self upon self, as when they identify with their bodies or other possessions, or with their senses and phenomenal psyche. It is axiomatic that self and non-self are contradictory, and since non-self exists, self must exist.

Superimposition (adhyāsa) is the key term. He defines it as the apparition, in memory form, of something seen formerly in something else.<sup>51</sup> This term does not occur in the Upaniṣads or the Brahma Sūtras. Its synonyms, adhyāropa and samāropa, however, are common in Śūnyavādin Buddhist texts. The definition, too is Buddhistic; memory is the cardinal factor in error and illusion, since it couples the unreal with the real. But Śaṅkara's māyāvāda differs essentially from the Buddhist version. He holds that every illusion must have a real ground. If there were no water anywhere, there could be no mirages. If there were no snakes, one could not have seen a snake in the past, and so now could not superimpose the memory of a snake on the rope seen on a path in the dusk.

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50. Introduction to Commentary on Brahma-Sūtras, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 34, p. 9; S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 510.

51. Ibid., p. 4; Ibid., p. 509.

An objector asks: But is not superimposition only of one object on another object? You have just said that the Ātman is not an object, so object-predicates cannot be superimposed on it. Śaṅkara answers: The Ātman is not univocally a non-object, because it is the object of the idea of Ātman, and because it is known through immediate intuition to exist. The pure subject is not a sense-object, but it exists nonetheless and is the object of the concept of the pure subject. Further, there are examples to show that perceptible objects need not be superimposed only on other perceptible objects. Men superimpose a blue color on the colorless, imperceptible ākāśa (ether, space) of the sky.

Adhyāsa (superimposition) is equated with avidyā (ignorance), the cause of transmigration in all the mokṣa systems. Its opposite, vidyā (knowledge), is ascertaining the true nature of things by discriminating between the superimposition and its ground. But all transmigration (saṃsāra) is under the sway of ignorance (avidyā). All worldly knowledge and action, whether religious or secular, are based on this metaphysical ignorance. The means of knowing (pramāṇas) and all the statements in the Scriptures are included in the domain of ignorance (avidyā), because they presuppose a phenomenal knower, which in turn presupposes superimposition of phenomenal attributes on the pure subject.

Śaṅkara's ploy here is the same as Nāgārjuna's. The validity of statements is not impaired because they are included in emptiness or ignorance, since the whole of the world is so included, and only worldly validity is claimed for the statements.

What does one superimpose? All phenomenal things of which one says 'I' or 'mine'; desires, intentions, doubts, decisions; sensory attributes such as mute, deaf, blind; bodily attributes such as stout, lean, standing, walking; and extra-personal appendages such as wife and children. Liberation is to be attained by discriminating between these false identifications and the true self, the pure subject. For Śaṅkara, knowledge (jñāna) is the only final means to mokṣa (release), and all other means such as works, devotion, and cultivation of samādhi (concentration, direct insight) are preparatory. He is an intellectual rather than an ecstatic mystic.

Śaṅkara defends the definition of Brahman as that from which the arising, abiding and ceasing of the world proceed.<sup>52</sup> He lists and rejects alternative theories as to what the world arises from, and concludes that Brahman is the only possible cause of a world having the attributes of this one. This is the usual procedure for an Indian philosopher about to state his theory of causation. The danger in the procedure is that one can so easily omit one of the alternatives, so that the method of elimination works better for rhetorical effect than for logical proof.

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52. Ibid., 1.1.2; Ibid., p. 511.

A Vaiśeṣika objects: the existence of God the creator, sustainer and destroyer can be shown through observation and inference alone, without recourse to Scripture. Śaṅkara replies: Brahman is understood not through inference or other means of knowing (pramāṇas) but through ascertaining the meaning of the Upaniṣadic texts. But human understanding aids Scripture, and inference is an admissible means of knowing insofar as it does not contradict Scripture.

The Upaniṣads say that the Ātman (= Brahman) is to be known through direct intuition. They say, too, that this intuition is to be had only when one is properly instructed by a competent teacher. It follows, as Śaṅkara maintains, that the intuition of the enlightened ones--sākṣātkāra, 'realization'--is not the original source of this knowledge but its confirmation.

An objection: As Brahman is an existing entity, it must be the object of other means of knowing (pramāṇas) as well, in which case it is better to prove it through observation and inference (which are generally accepted) rather than through Scripture (which only āstikas accept). Śaṅkara replies: As Brahman is not a sense-object, it has no connection with those other means of knowing. If Brahman were a sense-object, we could perceive the world as standing in the relation of effect to the cause Brahman, and so could know the cause from the effect. But as only the effect, the world, is perceived, it is impossible to decide whether it is connected with Brahman or with something else.

This is a contradiction of the Sāṅkhya claim that the existence of world-nature (prakṛti) is knowable from the existence of its effects. Śaṅkara says that unless both terms of a relation are known, the relation itself is not established.

Śaṅkara's pramāṇa (means of knowing) theory is concerned not so much with a critique of the several pramāṇas as with the assessment of their relative validity and interrelations.<sup>53</sup> He did not question the validity of observation and inference for purposes other than Brahman-knowledge, and he affirmed the relative world within its own sphere. "The entire complex of phenomenal existence is considered as true as long as the knowledge of Brahman being the Ātman of all has not arisen, just as the phantoms of a dream are considered to be true until the sleeper awakes."<sup>54</sup> But he held that the true nature of the cause of the world is too abstruse to be even conceived without the testimony of Scripture. The Veda is eternal and is a perfect means of knowledge (pramāṇa), so its perfect knowledge cannot be denied by reasoners. But if Scripture is in conflict with other means of knowledge (pramāṇas), it has to accommodate to them. Furthermore, reasoning is based on observation,

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53. N. K. Devaraj, An Introduction to Śaṅkara's Theory of Knowledge, Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University Press, 1962, p. 37.

54. On Brahma-Sūtra 2.1.14; S. Radhakrishnan and C.A. Moore, op. cit., p. 527.

and sākṣātkāra (realization) is a kind of observation, so it is possible to reason about Brahman. Reason is relative and contingent, though, so on matters where Scripture is sovereign it must yield to Scripture.<sup>55</sup>

Śaṅkara's theory of causality is called vivartavāda because he holds that the world is not a transformation (pariṇāma) of Brahman but an appearance (vivarta) grounded on it. Brahman is real, but the phenomenal world is neither wholly real nor wholly unreal; it is illusion (māyā). Śaṅkara is worried by the difficulty that the Yogācārins glossed over--whether a real thing can co-exist in the same plane with an unreal thing. He accepts the Śūnyavādin distinction between relative truth and absolute truth, so for him there is a difference of ontological level between the manifested world and its unmanifested, absolute cause. The relation between these two levels is 'inexpressible' (anirvacanīta).

The personal God, Īśvara, is the highest and first hypostasis of the impersonal Brahman. Īśvara is Saguṇa Brahman (Brahman with qualities), as against Nirguṇa Brahman (without qualities). During the cosmic interlude, individual souls lie unconscious in Īśvara, who is endowed with seed-potency (bīja-śakti) and thus can launch a new cycle of creation. Śaṅkara denies that there is a plurality of individual souls. Phenomenally there is a difference between the states of bondage and release that individuals exhibit. But phenomenal individuality is due to ignorance (avidyā), caused by 'limiting adjuncts' (upādhi) and constructed by false knowledge.<sup>56</sup> This comes very close to the Viṣṇāvādin explanation. Īśvara, like the store or foundation consciousness (ālaya-viṣṇāna), is a repository of seeds. Illusion superimposes diversity on the non-dual ground (Brahman, the dharmadhātu). The distinction between lower and higher Ātman is not real, but due to the 'limiting adjuncts' (upādhis), body and so on, that are the product of name-and-form as presented by ignorance.<sup>57</sup> This does not really modify Brahman. "As the magician is not at any time affected by the phantom he produces, because it is unreal, so the highest Ātman is not affected by the world-effects."<sup>58</sup> Likewise the relative world does not exist from the absolute standpoint. "For him who has reached the state of truth and reality the whole apparent world does not exist."<sup>59</sup>

Śaṅkara was radical in metaphysics, but conservative in ethics. He says that the knowledge of one action being right and another action being wrong is based on Scripture only, for it lies outside of sense-cognition.<sup>60</sup> He accepted the orthodox

55. On Brahma-Sūtra 2.1.4, 2.1.11, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 34, pp. 299, 315.

56. Ibid., 1.4.10; Ibid., p. 256.

57. Ibid., 1.4.22; S. Radhakrishnan and C.A. Moore, op. cit., p. 520.

58. Ibid., 2.1.9; Ibid., p. 523.

59. Ibid., 2.1.14; Ibid., p. 531.

60. Ibid., 3.1.25; Ibid., p. 536.



brāhmaṇical ethic, never turning against it the sharp edge of his critique, save in defence of the renunciant life against the householder life which the Mīmāṃsakas held to be incumbent on all at the proper stage of life.

It is often said by modern Vedāntins that when Buddhism disappeared from India the best of it had already been absorbed by Advaita Vedānta. This is clearly not the case in metaphysics, as I have tried to show. The Buddhist process-philosophy simply could not be absorbed into the Upaniṣadic tradition without a more radical contortion of it than even Śaṅkara was prepared to perpetrate. In ethics, Advaita Vedānta assimilated nothing but monasticism, which was by no means the best part of Mahāyāna. The zeal for the welfare of all living beings, the feeling for the kinship of the whole animate world, the vision of all the bodhisattvas from humble novices to superhuman saviors participating in the great work of compassion—all this left scarcely a trace in Śaṅkara's philosophy.

The reason is not in his metaphysics, which is quite close to Mahāyāna, but in his narrow range of concern and his disinterest in applying his metaphysics to mundane problems. That it has such applicability is confirmed by two incidents that happened to me in 1962.

A friend took me to visit the chief priest (mahant) of the Viśvanāth Temple in Banares, an intelligent and genial man in early middle age. When we had talked for some time and he realized that we had many interests and views in common, he said, "Race, nation and religion are just upādhis (limiting adjuncts). We have to observe them and live within our dharma, but we must remember that inside us all is one and the same Ātman."

Śaṅkara's ethical message is essentially that of the Gītā: accept the limiting adjuncts (upādhis) that society imposes on you in the sphere of worldly ethics, but reject them in your search for liberation from transmigration (saṃsāra). Nothing in his philosophy, though, requires this, except his conviction that Scripture is an adequate and necessary source of moral rules. If all the moral injunctions of Scripture are under the dominion of ignorance (avidyā), then they should be no more sacrosanct than any other worldly conventions.

#### F. Viśiṣṭa Advaita Vedānta

The philosophy of Rāmānuja (said to have lived 1017-1137 A.D.) resembles that of Śaṅkara in several external respects. It takes the Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the Brahma Sūtras as Scripture and tries to develop a philosophy that is maximally consonant with them. It is a theology, developed by a professional man of religion. Rāmānuja was a master of the famous Vaiṣṇava shrine at Śrīraṅgam. Unlike Śaṅkara, he was married for a while before becoming a renunciant. "Great men are often

unable to find a woman suitable for them, and Rāmānuja was not blessed with a wife who would strive for his ideals and thus increase his powers."<sup>61</sup> Rāmānuja was willing to give the world a try before forsaking it, which fact in a way epitomizes the difference between his philosophy and Śaṅkara's.

Śaṅkara had chosen a few radically monistic statements in the Upaniṣads as expressing the real intention of the Scriptures, and had interpreted all other passages so as to agree with these few sayings. Rāmānuja repudiated this principle and assumed that all passages in primary scripture (śruti) are equally authoritative.<sup>62</sup> He rejected Śaṅkara's distinction between the primary and secondary senses of expressions, and indicated that this distinction, like that between major and minor statements, was an arbitrary one not given in the scriptures themselves and hence based on no authority surer than human reason.

To the modern critic it is apparent that this is the Achilles' heel of all doctrines of scripture and hence of all attempts to base certainty on putatively revealed texts. Try as they may, theologians have been unable to show Scripture to be self-validating, and hence its authority is contingent on reason. Rāmānuja is as vulnerable as Śaṅkara. It is just as arbitrary to treat all passages equally as to give special authority to some.

A clear, simple and ingenious conceptual model underlies Rāmānuja's metaphysics, cognition theory, doctrine of scripture, and soteriology. He adopts the Sāṅkhya idea of diversity within the fundamental unity, rejects the Sāṅkhya dualism between matter and spirit, and develops the Sāṅkhya view of qualities as parts of the underlying substance. He thus puts together the two main outgrowths of the Upaniṣadic tradition--Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta of the Brahma Sūtras. He rejected the Buddhist metaphysical ingredients in Śaṅkara--the theory of two truths (absolute and relative), distinction between primary and secondary senses of scriptural passages, and māyāvāda. But Rāmānuja's ethics is in some ways closer to Mahāyāna Buddhism than is Śaṅkara's, partly for the reason that he emphasizes karmic retribution, and partly because he gives high priority to devotion. (Fig. 2a by Ninian Smart underrates devotion in Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda, because he failed to take the devotional texts into account.)

Rāmānuja holds that all cognition is determinate, that it apprehends distinctions actually there in the object, and that error is merely incomplete knowledge rather than superimposition. There is no simple, non-conceptual knowledge (nirvikalpaka jñāna), and thought construct (vikalpa) per se is not erroneous. Cognition is a subject-object relation, and is only possible when there is an object to relate to.

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61. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. 2, p. 666.

62. J.A.B. Van Buitenen, Rāmānuja's Vedārthasamgraha, Poona: Deccan College Monograph Series, No. 16, 1956, p. 58.

All knowledge is intrinsically valid, and is correct insofar as it is complete.

There are three primary kinds of being (tattva)-- God (= Brahman), souls, and inanimate matter. All three are real, since for Rāmānuja whatever is cognized is real. Souls and matter, though, are dependent on God. The highest Brahman is identical with Īśvara; there is no distinction between qualityless (nirguṇa) and with qualities (saguṇa), and Brahman, though free from all imperfections, possesses all excellent qualities. Selves and matter constitute the form, that is the body, of God. They are a manifestation of Brahman's power, which he exercises for sport rather than out of any need to create, but the souls exist in their own right and by their own nature; they are not mere limiting adjuncts (upādhis). As the soul rules the material body, so God rules his body that consists of souls and matter. Bondage to transmigration is due to the soul's failure to recognize its essential nature, which is knowledge, because it is engrossed in good and evil works, a form of ignorance.<sup>63</sup> Liberation is not sublation of the individual self, nor merger with God, but becoming like God and participating in the majesty of God. But though liberation may be earned in this life, it is only attained at death. Rāmānuja, like his immediate predecessors, denies that there are living liberated ones (jīvan-mukta).

The road to salvation is neither good works, nor yogic trance, nor intellectual knowledge, though all of these are propaedeutic. The sine qua non of salvation is faith, self-surrender to the grace of God, devotion. Nonetheless liberation, though not achieved through knowledge, consists of direct realization that the soul is a mode of God. Action and ordinary knowledge are means to attain ordinary devotion; ordinary devotion is a means towards the highest devotion, which depends on the grace of God. The knowledge that is the immediate cause of liberation thus depends on grace and is not an independent human means to salvation.

The most original aspect of Rāmānuja's system is his revision of the axiomatic. He rejects the principle that to be real means to be independent. The material world and the souls, he says, are utterly real even though they are utterly dependent on God. He refuses to pursue the principle of extraneous validation (the unlimited limiter) to the margins of absurdity, but explains the relation between God and the world in terms of a common sense idea of the parts and the whole (note that Rāmānuja's God is not limited to the cosmos, which is merely his body but not his soul). Similarly, he builds diversity into all the unities he affirms, and simply refuses to create the problems that would push him to divorce the manifold from the real.

We have seen that the uncompromising non-dualists-- the Mahāyāna Buddhists and The Advaita Vedāntins -- are forced to resort to a double-decker theory of

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63. S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 549.

knowledge in order to sustain that reality is free from all diversity. Diversity will out, either in the metaphysics or in the epistemology. In general, systems that opt for one kind of duality do not opt for the other, but the choice of at least one duality is inescapable. The reason lies not in the nature of reality (about which agnosticism is up to now the best position), but in the structure of the human game of philosophy. Our Indian philosophers have all wrestled with the meaning of 'same' and 'different', ordinary-language terms that are undoubtedly meaningful in common sense use. They have performed a sorting operation, isolating differences and then re-examining samenesses for residual differences. So they have arrived by extrapolation at two limit concepts. For Śaṅkara, these are absolute sameness (of Brahman in itself) and absolute difference (of appearance and reality). Rāmānuja simply sorts the heap in a different way. Rather than extracting the differences and putting them in a separate basket, he picks them out and arranges them Chinese-box fashion within the same basket.

#### IV. Conclusion

At the start of this chapter, I promised a tentative theory of Indian philosophy, its development and its decline. Here, in fragmentary form and redolent of conjecture, is the theory.

The primary aim of the classical schools of philosophy (darśanas) was to explain the world and person rather than to change them, operate on them, or solve practical problems. The philosophers and their clients wanted not so much to attain mokṣa (release) as to know that it is there and attainable in principle. The physics that they evolved satisfied the contemplative's esthetic need rather than the engineer's or chemist's practical one. The psychology, particularly that based on yogic introspection, was powerful enough to have been widely applied, but apart from training more yogins it seems not to have been put to work.

In this respect classical Indian and Greek philosophy are much alike. They differ in the spheres where some application was made. Greek political philosophy clearly conceived man's power to change his institutions; Indian political philosophy did not. Indian psychology clearly articulated the Indian faith that the human individual can be transformed into a superhuman being. The Hellenistic world held this idea in colloidal solution among the many ingredients of its exotic cults, but never really absorbed it. Saviors were always from the other world, never from this. The causal principle is evident. Where either tradition had an adequate base of empirical knowledge, it developed faith in the possibility of changing and guiding one's destiny. Cultural experience begets faith, and faith begets philosophical elaboration.



The Vedāntin philosophers who dominate the late classical period are not really interested in physics, psychology, ethics, or politics. They are theologians who have foresworn much of the earlier problematic. In this they differ sharply from the medieval European scholastics, who with no greater an empirical basis concerned themselves with the whole range of human and scientific problems. The difference stems from fundamental religious orientation. Universalist concern for all living beings flourished in India for over a millenium chiefly among those segments of society that were most receptive to Buddhism. The orthodox Hindu revival, unlike Buddhism, took for granted that the majority of mankind are by nature uneducatable, that their religion must be one of second-best and surrogate.

Buddhism waned in India doubtless because it gradually lost its universalism. The Tantric movement, from about 600 A.D. onwards, was avowedly esoteric and reserved for an elite, so its radical rejection of social and moral taboos did not destroy the fabric of conservative custom, or heal the social cleavages that deepened with the contraction of the horizon of empathy.

It is easy to overstate this point. Śaṅkara was a great teacher and an active missionary for his cause. Rāmānuja was an ardent propagator of a devotional cult open to all members of society. Neither of them was negligent of the other-worldly welfare of mankind. But they were not prepared to repudiate injustice and pernicious institutions in this world. So they contracted the range of their philosophies.

Rāmānuja was a conservative representative of the devotional movement. The wealthy Vaiṣṇava shrine with which he was associated was not exactly a people's church. Devotion, though, did not require temple paraphernalia, the pilgrimage industry, or the other money-making activities which the shrine priests managed to graft onto it. In North India, under the social impact of Islam, nirguṇa bhakti (qualityless devotion), drawing on the metaphysics of Śaṅkara and the religious radicalism of Tāntrikas such as Saraha, developed into a social radicalism and came close to sweeping away the particularist social order. The devotionalists, for various reasons, showed little philosophical creativity after Rāmānuja. Their organizations lacked the combination of structure and looseness that had made Buddhism so philosophically creative. Their dependence on the charisma of their leaders made philosophical disputation within a school more difficult. And their commitment to devotion led them to seek religio-moral rather than intellectual solutions to worldly problems.

The Hindu tradition as good as gave up the project of finding mokṣa (release) through the practice of morality, philosophy and contemplation. The medieval vogue was for simple faith cults, and salvation through the grace of God. Faith in man's power ebbed drastically, and with it the enterprise of working out mokṣa philosophies. Rāmānuja explicitly rejected the idea of the living liberated ones (jīvan-mukta) that had launched the philosophical tradition in the early archaic

period. The chief reason for abandoning this project was that all the means that had been devised over fifteen hundred years had proved rather ineffective. True, some yogins developed remarkable powers and could revel in deep samādhis (concentration, direct insight), but they paid a cost far too high for most people to consider. Mokṣa (release) retained a position of honor, not because people were attaining it, but because it offered a good rationalization for living the monastic life. But this life could be lived without endeavoring to solve philosophical problems. There was enough philosophy available for study, and there was no acute need to invent more for this purpose.

So the mokṣa (release) philosophies failed in that they did not find the efficacious ways to the goal which they purposed to discover. But they succeeded in that they rendered the concept of release intelligible and articulated a satisfying contemplative world-view around it. They succeeded in that they drew out most of the possible consequences from the axioms and data at their disposal, and exhausted their problematic. They failed in that they did not examine and get behind their axiomatic, did not open up new sources of factual knowledge, and did not rejuvenate their problematic.

India's entry into the modern world has altered the milieu in which the traditional systems of philosophy (darśanas) are studied and transmitted. The pundit's tradition is dwindling away, the study of philosophy has passed to the modern universities, and the classical darśanas, like Sanskrit, are no longer a male prerogative but to some extent a genteel course for young ladies whose marriageability will be enhanced by taking so non-utilitarian and prestigious a subject. Science commands much more actual respect and enjoys immensely greater financial support than philosophy in Indian higher education. Must we conclude that the classical darśanas are doomed to become mere museum pieces?

My guess is that the eclectic, ill-thought-out updating process started at the beginning of the nineteenth century will continue, that the strong personal appeal of the classical darśanas will persist among the modern educated class, and that sooner or later the philosophers will acquire the courage and confidence to integrate the classical heritage with modern thought in a genuinely rigorous and creative way. This resuscitation will require that the philosophical patterns, arguments, strategies, visions and values be liberated from the incubus of obsolete science and non-progressive values. An essential preparation for the new project is a thoroughgoing historical critique of the sort that I have reverently and irreverently broached in this essay.